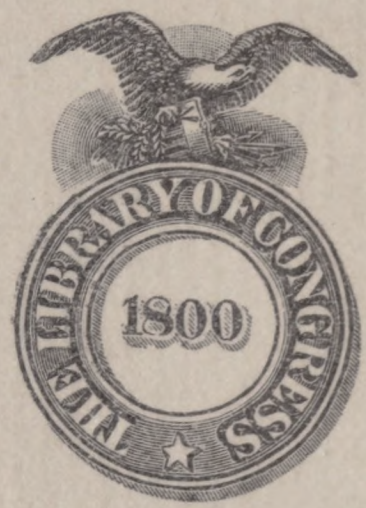


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A Strenuous Lover.

A ROMANCE OF A NATURAL LOVE'S VAST POWER.

ORIGINAL STORY BY
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REVISED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF
JOHN R. CORYELL.

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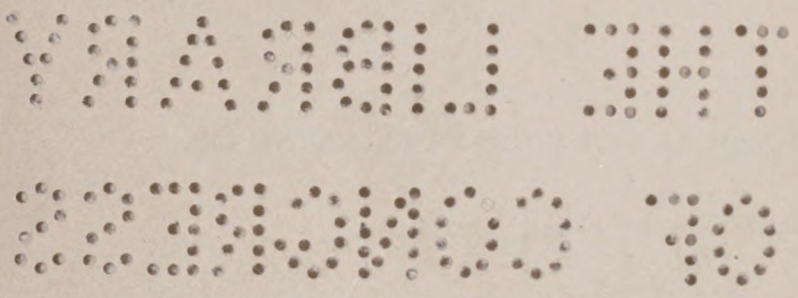
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Of what avail the largest gifts of heaven,
When drooping health and spirits go amiss?
How tasteless then whatever can be given!
Health is the vital principle of bliss.

Thomson—"Castle of Indolence."

"Love stifles and dies if answered by weakness. The joyous response which physical perfection alone can give is needful to a love that will live and last,"



A Strenuous Lover

CHAPTER I

"Oh, I don't want to take any more of that nasty stuff."

"But you won't get well, dear, if you don't take medicine; and the doctor is sure this will help you; arn't you, doctor?"

"I have great hopes of it, Mrs. Raymond. The complications of Arthur's case are of such a character that in order to reach the various ramifications of the—er—the—let me simplify and say disorder—the—er—disorder, it is necessary to proceed with caution and—er—as I may say attack the various manifestations one by one. You remember the fable of the bundle of fagots, Arthur? Yes, of course."

The physician rubbed his soft hands slowly together and smiled blandly first at the greatly impressed mother and then at the querulous son.

Dr. Brayton was a most successful practitioner of medicine, with an imposing presence, an unctuous voice and a way of hesitating profoundly when a sufficiently large word did not present itself for his use; on which occasions it was his habit to appear to condescend to a word or a phrase suited to the lay mind of his auditor. This made him very popular; and it was a not uncommon thing for his patients to declare that it did them good only to have him come into the room.

Evidently, however, the patient in this case was not of that mind. He fidgeted fretfully in his chair while the doctor talked in his meaningless phrases, and utterly refused to smile in response to the latter's pleasantry about the old fable.

"I've done nothing but take medicine for Heaven knows how long, and I only grow worse," he said discontentedly. "I don't even know what is the matter with me. What is it, doctor?"

"I shall—er—take occasion to converse with your mother concerning that matter," answered the physician with supernatural gravity.

"Never mind, Arthur dear, what is the matter with you, but take the medicine the doctor prescribes, and you will surely get well; won't he, doctor?" said the mother soothingly.

"Beyond a doubt, beyond a doubt," replied the doctor solemnly, rising as he spoke, for the atmosphere of the room was dreadfully close and he wished to get out of it; "you must rely upon your physician, Arthur; you must rely upon your physician."

"Rely on you? of course I rely on you," said Arthur pettishly; "but that doesn't make me well. And look at the bottles of medicine I've taken! A year ago I could walk about out-of-doors; now I can't go off the floor, or even get a breath of fresh air."

"He is always wanting to have the windows open, doctor," said the mother, looking anxiously at the doctor. "Won't you tell him how unsafe that would be?"

"But it's summer," wailed Arthur, "and I don't see how fresh air can do me any harm."

"A draft, in your condition, my dear boy," said the physician, "might induce conditions which—er—well, I would not be responsible for the consequences and er—"

"Oh," cried Arthur, "I sometimes think you'd better give me something to put an end to me quick. Honest, doctor! do you think I'll ever be well? I get worse and worse and weaker and weaker in spite of all the medicine and the nursing."

"Certainly, you will get well, my boy. There, there! don't permit yourself to have such dismal thoughts. Well, I must be going. Have that prescription filled out, Mrs. Raymond, and see that Arthur takes his dose regularly."

"And the cod liver oil, doctor? Shall he go on taking that, too?"

"Oh, I hate that stuff," cried Arthur.

"Dear me!" murmured the doctor placidly. "Yes, he must take that; yes, yes! The cod liver oil is so easily assimilated—that is, when taken with—er—I think you have some of those tabloids? Yes. And it has—er—an especial nutritive value—in fact, builds up the tissues as nothing else—er—and taken in conjunction with this new prescription should produce a marked effect. I think Arthur shows a little more vigor to-day, Mrs. Raymond? Shall we go now? Thank you! Good morning, Arthur, my boy!"

"Good morning!"

The door of the bedroom was opened by Mrs. Raymond, and before it closed upon her and the doctor Arthur could hear her say in a low tone:

"Robert has been violent again; I want you to see him."

Arthur shuddered and rose unsteadily to his feet. Robert! Robert, the eldest son, a hopeless maniac, confined in a padded room upstairs, held by iron chains; and he, Arthur, an equally hopeless invalid, held to his floor by a weakness that was greater than the strength of the chains of iron.

He dragged himself weakly to the window and looked out wearily. He thought of the time not so long ago when he played ball in those vacant lots; then of the time when he began to find that play tired him; how school tired him; how, later, it tired him to go to the office to work with his father. And now, at twenty, he was waiting—for what? Was it to die?

He thought of the cold, unsympathetic eye of the suave doctor, and wondered if he had even the interest in him to want to keep him alive in order to get his fees. He turned

from the window and looked at where the bottles of medicine were ranged on a shelf.

"I don't believe it has done me a particle of good," he muttered; "I don't believe Brayton expects it to do me any good. And if my case is hopeless I don't see why I should swill that nasty stuff."

"With the fretful impatience and irritability of a sick man he made his way across the room and opened the door into the next room —the front bedroom of the floor—and went through.

It was the sum of his diversions now to go from one stuffy room into the other; both kept free from drafts for his sake during the day. The front room was his sister Maude's bedroom.

It tired him to walk even that short distance, and he sank into a chair by the window, his face on his hand, his elbow on the arm of the chair. Suddenly he started up, breathing quickly from the exertion, but looking eagerly down to the sidewalk.

A burst of merry, girlish laughter had fallen on his ear—the sweet laughter of one he knew, of one he delighted to look at.

And there she stood on the sidewalk, fair

to see, full of delight to ear as well as eye, as she looked up to the parlor windows of the Raymond house saying something and laughing.

It was Amelia Winsted, the only daughter of the family next door, his playmate of many years, his romance now; a fairy creature whom everybody loved and petted; the sight of whom sent even Arthur's feeble life throbbing more quickly through his veins.

But he shrank back from the window, now, with a scowl and a little moan, in which were despair and bitterness. Close by Amelia's side was a dark, handsome young man, whose broad shoulders and athletic frame filled Arthur with a sense of self-pity.

"Because he is so well and strong, and I am so puny," he wailed, the very words coming from his own lips like a direful answer to his own piteous self-questioning.

He dropped into the chair again and buried his face in his hands. His health and strength had gone from him, his very youth seemed as far away as if his years had reached the traditional limit, and now he felt as if the last tie that held him to life had been severed; for had not little Amelia Winsted turned from

her weak and sickly old playmate to the broad-shouldered athlete.

He started up again and looked out of the window, the pleasure of seeing the dainty little creature outweighing the pain of seeing her by the side of a rival.

The young people had moved on down the street, the young man walking with a easy, swinging stride that bespoke a great reserve of strength, Amelia tripping along at his side, looking up at him, her pretty face smiling and dimpled with happiness.

It seemed to the wretched invalid that he could hear the tones of her sweet voice, could see the delicate pink of her cheeks deepening against the milky whiteness of her skin.

At that moment Arthur Raymond loathed himself and his weakness; but he pitied himself, too, and in his heart reproached the girl who had deserted her old comrade in his illness for the new acquaintance with his strength and vigor.

Self-scorn, self-pity, grief and physical weakness produced their effect, and he dropped back into the chair sobbing.

In his absorption he failed to notice the entrance into the room of his sister, a robust,

blooming girl two years older than he. She had opened the door and entered; her first expression one of disgust at the close atmosphere of the room, her next one of deep love and pity, as her eyes fell on her sobbing brother.

"Arthur dear!" she cried, running quickly to him and kneeling tenderly by his side so that she might comfort him; "what is the matter? Are you feeling worse?"

Arthur brushed away the tears of which he was ashamed and, having controlled himself, exclaimed bitterly:

"Oh, Margie! why am I not strong and well like you? Why are other men big and strong while I am a physical wreck?"

Between Arthur and Maggie there had always been the strong tie of comradeship. They had been playmates and confidants of each other through all the years of their lives; so that it was easier for Margie than it would have been for another to guess correctly at the immediate cause of her brother's emotion.

It was she who had been talking with Amelia from the parlor window; and seeing Arthur by the window from which he could

have seen Amelia and her escort, she leaped, with a woman's quick intuition, to the truth.

But she found it easier to guess the cause of his grief than to find the means to allay it. He was weak and sickly; he was set apart from the life that went on about him; and that life inevitably went on as if he no longer existed. Amelia always asked solicitously about him, and would be rejoiced to see him well again; but even the loving sister could not blame her little neighbor for enjoying life.

"You are big enough if you were only strong enough, Arthur dear," she said with a tender futility. She could think of no word of comfort, so woman like she tried to lead her brother away from the subject that grieved him.

"So much the worse for me to be big and so weak," he answered. "Why, a two-year-old baby could master me. And you"—he looked her over half enviously—"you could handle me as if I were a doll. How well and strong you are, Margie!" he exclaimed with a sudden look of wonder. "It seems as if you had been getting stronger and heartier while I grew weaker. Is it because you are so happy being in love with Herbert?"

Margie blushed and laughed in a low, shy way. "I suppose," she said archly, "I'm not any worse for loving and being loved, but" — and her honest face grew serious—"I am so well and strong because Herbert has taught me how to be so."

"Herbert!" said Arthur with the ghost of a smile; "why, Margie, you've always been well."

"Not as well as now, though," she cried eagerly. "Just look at me!"

She sprang to her feet and stood before him, her figure erect. Then she turned about and stood for a moment with her back to him.

"Don't you notice any change?" she demanded, facing him again.

"I notice you're awfully nice to look at," he answered, wishing in his heart that he could stand as straight and have so full a chest.

"Thank you!" she laughed; "being my brother you may compliment me as much as you please. But don't you see how free I am; and how muscular? See me bend and reach!"

Unconscious of the grace and beauty of her movements, she raised her arms slowly until

they were extended their full length over her head, then brought them back and out and down, her plastic body moving in harmony with her arms. A moment later her fingers were touching the floor.

"There!" she said with a gasp and a wry face; "I'd show you how supple I am, but indeed the air in here is so close that it almost makes me ill to breathe it."

"I know it must be bad," he assented. "But Margie! what does it mean? You are as graceful as an actress."

"As some actress, if you please," she laughed. "Why, Herbert coaxed me to get rid of my corsets almost the first thing after we were engaged; and I have been exercising and walking and doing all sorts of unladylike things ever since. That's why I'm so well. And I am well, Arthur dear. How I wish I could give you some of my strength."

"I don't want any of your strength, dear girl," he answered gloomily; "but I wish I had some of my own. I suppose Herbert doesn't know of any magical way of making me strong, does he?"

"Would you like to talk with him about it?" Margie demanded eagerly.

Arthur laughed wearily.

"I believe you think your Herbert can do for me what the doctors can't," he said. "I guess you're well and strong because you're happy in your love. There's no such luck for me."

Margie stroked his hand tenderly. Her own happiness made her the more sympathetic with him.

"I don't know that Herbert can tell you how to get well, Arthur, but he is so honest and good that it will do you no harm to have a talk with him. You know you haven't seen him since our engagement."

"Bring him up to-night, Margie," he said, turning his head away. "I'd like to know him better for your sake. There may not be such a great deal of time. I wish the doctor would be honest with me; I'm not afraid of the truth."

"Don't, Arthur dear! please don't," murmured Margie, a catch in her voice.

CHAPTER II

It is a common and, perhaps, a humane device to keep a sick person from a knowledge of the severity of his illness; but it is almost as common for the supersensitive invalid to become subtly aware of the changes in feeling that seem to charge the atmosphere.

Never before had Arthur manifested so hopeless and gloomy a disposition concerning his illness. It was while he talked to his favorite sister, Margaret, who had been sent to him to insure an absence of suspicion on his part that Dr. Brayton was giving his views on Arthur's case to Mr. and Mrs. Raymond; the former of whom had taken the unwonted step of leaving his office in the middle of the afternoon in order that he might have a personal interview with the family physician.

Mr. Raymond had vital reasons of his own for wishing to know definitely the condition in which the doctor found his sons; and he had waited in the library, while the

physician was upstairs, a prey to the sadness which a parent must feel who has two sons in the condition that his were.

In his heart he harbored no hope. Robert had been insane since his sixth year; and after a consultation of specialists it had been decided that there was a tumor pressing on the brain, impossible of safe removal, and which rendered recovery impossible.

"Do you see any change for the better in Robert?" the father asked when the physician came downstairs.

"There is no change for the better, my dear sir. I regret to say that I can offer you no hope of your eldest son's recovery."

The lines in the father's face were tense; he had nerved himself for this answer, and for worse. He gently touched the hand of his wife, put out toward him.

"And Arthur? Does he seem any better?"

"I cannot detect any amelioration of the—er—"

"Doctor," broke in Mr. Raymond huskily, "you know better than anyone the importance to me of your answer; but I must have the truth without palliation. I can bear it. Tell me plainly what his condition is."

It was hard for the physician to give a direct answer, but it was plain that Mr. Raymond would not be put off with anything less. Dr. Brayton cleared his throat, rehearsed in his mind the customary platitudes as to there being hope always; that a favorable turn might come at any time, and like meaningless phrases; then answered:

"I regret to say, Mr. Raymond, that I have exhausted the resources of medicine in the effort to cope with the insidious disease which has fastened—er—fastened—which to simplify, is slowly but surely sapping your son's life forces."

"My God!" murmured the father, pressing his hand on his heart.

"Perhaps a change—" suggested the mother in a broken voice.

"Would a change of air, of scene, do any good, doctor? If a voyage to Europe, a sojourn in the country, anywhere, would do any good—"

"I always feel," answered the doctor in his most unctuous tone, "that it is wrong to send a patient from home in such a case. Keep Arthur with you. And yet," he added in his professional tone of comfort and hope,

"I do not give up. I am prescribing now one of the strongest drugs in the pharmacopoeia and shall look for some improvement. This is a most peculiar case—one of the strangest in my experience. The manifestations are—er—so—er—subtle, the progress so—er—insidious—that it has been extremely difficult—er—in short—er—it has taxed even my resources to—er—cope with it."

"Doomed!" murmured the father, his hand seeking out his wife's. "Our poor boy! and he seemed so well a child!"

"I watched over him with the tenderest care," sobbed the heart-broken mother. "When Robert was lost to us I determined that no harm should come to Arthur, and yet it has found him."

This was the story that was kept from Arthur but told to his sisters in order that nothing might be spared by any of them in aiding in the softening of the time that remained to the invalid.

Margie alone refused to give up hope, and when she told the story to Herbert that evening he protested vehemently that the case could not, in reason, be so hopeless.

"He wants to see you, Herbert," Margie

said. "You and I will go up there for a little while. We cannot remain long, for the air in his room is awful; but I know it will do him good to talk with you. Dear old Arthur! If only I could give him some of my strength!"

"You have no more than you ought to have," said Herbert, drawing her to his side with passionate fondness; "and no more than every woman ought to have. But let us go see Arthur. I have little knowledge enough, but before I would give up a human life I would fight to the last gasp. I tell you, Margie, the doctors put all their trust in drugs and poisons, and have none left for nature. And yet nature keeps fighting hard and pointing out the right way all the time."

"Come to Arthur!" cried Margie, her eyes glowing with the love and confidence she felt. Indeed, it seemed to her that it was enough to inspire one with new life only to look into the brown eyes of her lover, and to listen to his clear-cut words and incisive tone.

And surely there was a vivifying force in the earnestness and conviction with which Herbert spoke.

Maude was with Arthur when they went

up to his room, but she gladly accepted the relief of their presence and went down to breathe a fresher, purer air than was permitted to invade the sick-room.

There was a few commonplaces exchanged at first, but presently Herbert exclaimed in a tone of dismay:

"This air is enough to kill you, Arthur; I'd be sick if I stayed here an hour."

"I can't stand a draft," said Arthur, listlessly.

"Is the air like this all the time?" Herbert demanded.

"It is freshened every morning," Arthur replied.

"Every morning! Merciful Heaven! Why, Arthur, don't they know that every breath of this polluted air you take into your lungs robs you of an appreciable amount of vitality? Does the doctor know you have your room like this?"

"What does it matter?" Arthur demanded with a sudden, fitful vivacity. "Do you think I don't notice how kind everybody is to me since the doctor was here this afternoon. Not but they're always kind, but—Oh, well! suppose the air is bad?"

Margie looked from her brother to her lover in consternation. Herbert was silent for a while, seemingly oblivious for the time of the presence of the others. Suddenly he broke out:

"Arthur, I wouldn't give up if I were you. If the doctor gives up, so much the more reason why you should take hold and help nature."

"I guess nature's given up too," answered Arthur hopelessly. "It'll all very well for you and Margie to talk, Herbert, for you two are strong and well; but what can I do? Look at me!"

"I've been looking at you. Arthur. You've got the frame for a big man; and you've got a jaw and a chin that ought to make you get well in spite of all the doctors that ever poured poison into foolish patients. If you will make up your mind to be well, you will be. You say Margie's well and strong. Is Maude strong, too?"

"Why, no, she isn't."

"Well, Margie would be like Maude if she were as foolish as Maude. She was going the same way until I persuaded her to take up physical culture."

Arthur laughed bitterly. "A nice subject for physical culture I'd be! How would I begin?"

"Begin by opening your windows, Arthur. I tell you drafts won't hurt you. See here, Arthur! You're Margie's brother, and you must live to be mine. I'm not a doctor or a prophet, but I vow I believe you've as many years ahead of you as I have."

"I wish you were a prophet," said Arthur; but Margie noticed that his tone was not as hopeless as it had been.

"I've been studying your face, Arthur, and I know from your steady eye, your square jaw and firm chin that you have courage. I believe I can tell you something without danger of scaring you to death."

"Go on!" said Arthur quickly; "what is it?"

"It's what you've guessed already," said Herbert, sharply. Margie put out her hand in terror, but Herbert went on: "The doctor says you can't live."

Arthur fell back in his chair, paler, if that were possible, than before; then he smiled at Margie as she dropped with a cry of pity at his feet.

"I thought so, dear girl," he said gently; "I was sure of it the moment I looked into mother's eyes. Well, Amelia won't mind it so much now, and I'm glad she won't."

"Amelia Winsted?" demanded Herbert, whose clear eyes had never left Arthur's face. Margie nodded. "You love that pretty little thing?"

"They were playmates since Amelia was a baby and Arthur used to draw her about in his little wagon."

"And you'll let that fellow Morgan have her?" Herbert demanded in his incisive way. "I know something about him. He belongs to my athletic club. He's just begun to practice criminal law, and if reports are correct he's as bad as any client he's ever likely to have. Don't let that fellow win her to break her heart, Arthur."

"What can I do? If I thought there was a living change—" He stopped and looked eagerly at Herbert.

"May I open the windows, Arthur? Remember! the doctor says you can't live. What will it matter if you go a week sooner or later?"

"Herbert!" gasped Margie, in horror at her lover's brutality.

"Open the windows, Herbert!" cried Arthur; "give me some fresh air! You are right in that, anyhow. Margie, he's right; and he goes about his work in the right way. Tell me what to do, Herbert; I swear I'll follow your instructions to the letter."

Herbert was already opening the windows wide to let in the revivifying air. He stopped in front of them to inhale and exhale half a dozen long breaths before he returned to Arthur's side.

"Don't take another drop of medicine, Arthur. If you are going to die, what is the use of poisoning yourself?"

"But mother will never consent," said Margie. "She believes in medicine as she does in heaven; it is like a superstition to her."

"Don't let her know, then. Pour out the dose regularly and throw it out of the window. I hate deceit, but you are not strong enough to fight yet, and your life is your own. The doctor confesses his inability to save you; so I think you are justified in refusing to drug yourself."

"Tell me what to do," said Arthur, breath-

ing more deeply of the fresh air than he had done in months of the foul gases which had composed his sole atmosphere.

"To-night do nothing but stand by the window and take deep, deep breaths. To-morrow I'll see you and give you instructions about some light exercises. If you find you have more appetite than usual to-morrow don't eat all you want to, but eat slowly and only of plain food. Stand up and let me see you breathe."

Arthur stood up in front of the window and breathed as deeply as he knew how. Herbert watched him carefully.

"You don't know how," he said. "Take the air in slowly through your nose; when you think your lungs are full as they can hold, put back your shoulders and take in more air; then let it all go out through the mouth as quickly as possible. Now try that!"

Arthur followed the directions and presently with the delight of a child in a new game, was breathing in and expelling the pure air. He would have continued the exercise until he was exhausted if Herbert had not stopped him and urged him to moderation.

"But I want to say this, Arthur," he said

in that earnest, convinced tone of his, "you will get well; don't doubt it for a minute. I can see it in the way you take hold of the thing."

"Really, do you think so?"

"On my honor, I do."

No one could hear Herbert Courtney speak like that without believing him. Arthur laughed aloud with the glee of a child. He was sure that already he was feeling better than he had done for months.

"Ah, but," said he dolefully a moment later, "before I am well Amelia will be lost to me. And anyhow I can never be as strong as that Morgan."

"I can't promise you anything about Amelia," said Herbert in his downright way, "but I can tell you you can be as strong and stronger than that fellow if you will try. Why, although I'm three inches shorter than he is, I wouldn't be afraid to take my chances with him in a rough-and-tumble. He's a better sparrer than I am, and could use me up with the gloves, of course. And I was once pretty nearly as weak as you are."

"Really?"

"On my honor."

CHAPTER III

It happened, fortunately for Arthur's faith in Herbert, that the change from the close atmosphere of the sick room to the fresh air of heaven produced an effect little less than magical.

To Arthur, indeed, it was marvelous that so much fresh air as he had had the courage to admit to his room had not brought on pneumonia at the least; so that when, instead of being a victim to that fell disease, he actually found himself the following morning really better for the first time in many weeks, he was prepared to believe and act upon any advice Herbert gave him.

Mrs. Raymond, it is true, was nearly frantic when she discovered that Arthur not only had his window open in the daytime, but had it open all night; and when he obstinately refused to allow it to be closed, she sent in haste for Dr. Brayton.

The latter, when he came, listened with a solemn visage to the story of the revolt of

his patient, little dreaming of how complete that revolt was, however.

"I will speak to him," he said, with an air of being able to settle the matter without difficulty.

Accordingly, he followed Mrs. Raymond to the sickroom, and cast a swift glance at his patient. That glance was sufficient to assure him that Arthur was slightly improved.

"Well, Arthur," he said blandly, "what is this I hear about you? Sleeping with an open window, eh?"

"I'm better already," said Arthur, with a dogged air, as if he had no intention of beating a retreat from his position.

The doctor smiled, and turned complacently to Mrs. Raymond.

"You had that prescription filled, Mrs. Raymond? Yes? And Arthur took two doses last night? H'm! I did not wish to raise false hopes, but I believed that I had found the means at last of routing the enemy. You need not be alarmed now; Arthur will be better for a little stronger air now that the medicine is acting. The two will work together. The desire—er—for more air—er—was probably instinctive—yes, instinctive.

You will go on with the medicine, please. Yes, yes! we shall have him out again one of these days. But we must make haste slowly, Arthur; make haste slowly."

He was so pleased with his phrase that he repeated it unctuously two or three times, and quite overlooked Arthur's amazed disgust at his easy claim for the nasty drug, which Arthur had poured into the wash basin.

But that episode was fortunate, too, for it gave him renewed courage to discredit everything the doctor told him, and rid him of the compunction he had felt in even deceiving him by his silence.

"Such a fraud as he is," he said scornfully to Herbert that evening, "is not worth considering in any way."

And he occupied very little of their thoughts, for Herbert had brought with him a book of easy, simple exercises, which Arthur was to practice, and which Herbert demonstrated to him, so that he might have no difficulty in comprehending them.

"You may find yourself a little sore at first," Herbert explained, "but you must not mind that, and it will soon pass away. By the way, don't hesitate to drink all the water

you want; not iced water, but merely cool water; it will be good for you."

Arthur's enthusiasm was so great, and he was so elated with the belief that his recovery was a question of days, that Herbert went into a long explanation of the theory of the scheme of cure that he advocated.

"In a few words," he said finally, "the idea is this: that if you permit Nature to work in her own way, and only help her with all your power, she will cure you, if you are curable; for the instant anything is wrong with you she fires the alarm, which you will heed if you are sensible. Don't stuff yourself with food or drugs, which is like throwing stones on a dying fire; but help your system by giving it a fair chance. Assist it to eliminate the trouble within you, and don't add to its cares. You need lots of fresh air to help purify your blood, which is working hard to free your system of whatever is deleterious there; you need plenty of good, pure water; the least amount of wholesome food that will serve; and such exercise as will aid the lungs and the blood to do their part."

"Well," laughed Arthur, "I don't under-

stand anything about it, but I am ready to do whatever you say."

"But that is treating me as if I pretended to the mysterious knowledge of a physician, which I do not," protested Herbert. "I appeal to your common sense, and you must use it. There is nothing about this natural system that cannot be easily mastered; and you must master it. The main thing about it is that it teaches you to keep well."

"I'll study any books you bring me, and I'll listen to anything you say," answered Arthur, earnestly. "There never was a more sincere disciple than I am, I can assure you."

Just before leaving him that evening Margie said to him, thinking to make him happy: "Amelia was delighted when I told her you were feeling better to-day, and said she hoped she could soon see you."

"I don't think she cares much about that," answered Arthur, his face falling. "She might have seen me lots of times when she didn't take the trouble. I guess she hadn't much use for a sick fellow."

"Do you think she ought to have?" Herbert inquired quietly.

"Well," answered Arthur, in a hurt tone, "I hadn't any claim on her, but we have been playmates, and it seems to me she ought not to desert me just because I was sick. Surely you don't uphold her in it?"

"If you really want to know what I think," answered Herbert, after a moment of deliberation, "I'll tell you frankly. Do you want to know?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, I think you are considering your own side of the case only. She has not deserted you in any sense. She has inquired after you every day. True, she has not spent much time with you, but you must remember that she is well and active, and craves the companionship of those who are like herself. And she is entitled to just that. Even if she had been engaged to you, I think it would have been unnatural and selfish of you to want her to spend much time up here. I hope I haven't hurt your feelings, Arthur."

"Well," answered Arthur, "you've given me something to think about. I suppose I have been horribly selfish."

"Not any worse than sick folks generally are," said Herbert. "I wonder if it ever

occurred to you that a sick man was not just the sort to inspire love in a healthy girl. I tell you, Arthur, that you've got to get well before you can make Amelia care very much for you."

"To hear you talk," said Arthur, with a short laugh, "one would think you had no sentiment in you. For my part, Amelia and I are nothing but old friends, and I don't pretend to say what she ought or ought not do; but I do know that if she had cared half as much for me as I do for her, she would have been up here to see me twice as often as she has."

It was a long time before the subject was renewed between the two, but when it was, Arthur was forced to admit that he had not at this time fully comprehended Herbert's meaning.

He did very quickly comprehend, however, the system of natural cure which Herbert had brought to his attention, and he both studied it and practiced it with a fervor and steadiness that brought their reward.

There were times when it seemed to him that he was not gaining at all; but he was sure to laugh at himself immediately, for he

was going about the house freely in a few weeks, and as the months slipped by he found himself quite forgetting that he had been an invalid.

One day the complacency of the doctor, who calmly appropriated to himself all the credit of the wonderful transformation, so annoyed Arthur that in the presence of his mother he exclaimed:

"Do you know, Dr. Brayton, I think I owe it to you to tell you that I never took a drop of your medicine from the day you said I was going to die. I made believe take it, but poured it in the basin."

The doctor changed color, but had his benignant smile instantly ready for service.

"Well, well," he said, "then you were cured by the previous prescription. I often wondered why that had not taken hold better."

"What?" gasped Arthur.

"It is a common error," said the doctor, speaking rather to Mrs. Raymond than to Arthur, "that the uninformed fall into of—er—imagining that because they—er—do not understand a phenomenon, that, therefore, it is not comprehensible to others. Now, in

the case of your—er—son, I was operating along certain well-defined—er—lines, and—er—the value of each remedy was in each—er—what I may call cumulative effect, and—er—correlative value. If effect followed cause in a regular and easily recognized order there might, indeed, be little need for that exhaustive—er—study which is rendered imperative—er—to simplify is necessary to obtain a degree."

The doctor felt that he had made a pronounced success of his speech, whatever in his secret heart he thought about Arthur's cure, and Mrs. Raymond was divided between admiration of the family physician and dismay at Arthur's perverseness.

To Arthur, his mother's attitude toward the doctor and his useless medicine was absurd; to his mother, his attitude was almost wicked. She had been educated in a positively superstitious reverence for drugs, and could not understand or be patient with any such radical innovation as that by which Arthur declared he had been put on the high road to recovery.

Arthur was not old enough to know that it is always so when any change in estab-

lished customs is proposed. To him it seemed quite enough that the way was better, and he could never get over his amazement that anyone should prefer to die in the old way rather than live according to the new.

However, he did not worry himself greatly over the abstract side of the question, but gave himself up to the full enjoyment of the exhilaration of finding himself daily growing stronger.

Besides, he had another distraction, which at times rivaled his interest in his progress from illness and prostration to health and vigor; the better he became in health the greater grew his determination to save Amelia from the dark-browed scoundrel who seemed to have fascinated her.

He had accepted Herbert's statement about Morgan without any qualifying conditions, and was sure in his own mind that he was moved by very little else than disinterested affection for his old playmate in wishing to rid her of the attentions of her suitor.

It was well along into the winter before he met Charles Morgan, but he had seen Amelia almost every day, and was on the friendliest terms imaginable with her.

In compliance with Herbert's advice he had refrained from talking about his illness, either to Amelia or to anyone else; but it had been impossible for him to refrain from giving free vent to his enthusiasm on the subject of physical culture.

Amelia, who was the most light-hearted little creature in the world, listened to him, and laughed at him. She assured him gayly that if he was being helped by exercising and eating only two meals a day he certainly ought to keep on.

"I only wonder," she said merrily, "why you don't come down to one meal a day."

"I sometimes think of it," Arthur answered stoutly, whereat Amelia burst into a gale of laughter which even Arthur's seriousness could not resist, and he was compelled to laugh with her.

"What!" cried Amelia, on one occasion, "go without my breakfast, and take nothing but a cup of coffee?"

"Oh!" replied Arthur, with all the horror of a new convert, "coffee is the first thing to give up, because it is one of the worst poisons you—"

"Arthur," laughed Amelia, "I shall not

give up a thing. If I did, I know what the end would be; you'd have me wearing bloomers before I was a year older."

Arthur looked at her slender, corseted waist and wished he dared talk to her about that; but he could not risk offending her, so sighed, and said:

"There are worse things than bloomers, Amelia."

All of this was a huge joke to the merry little creature, and she naturally talked about it to Charles Morgan when he came to see her. He, however, saw what she herself did not suspect, that underneath all her raillery of her old playmate was a depth of affection that bordered very closely on love.

This made him sardonic in his humor, of which he made Arthur the butt; and when he passed the Raymond windows and saw Arthur sitting there, he could not keep a hateful sneer from curling his lip.

Finally the two rivals met in Amelia's parlor, and to Amelia's intense amusement Arthur, although scrupulously polite, showed very plainly that he meant to remain until the other took his departure.

Living next door as he did, he had such

a decided advantage that Morgan prudently declined the contest, and betook himself home earlier than usual, but only after exercising his bitter wit at Arthur's expense.

Several times afterward this happened, until Morgan had come to hate Arthur with a ferocious hatred; and they never met without exchanging glances which would make deep wounds had they been sword-points.

They had never met excepting in Amelia's presence, although Morgan had tried to contrive such a meeting, until one evening, just about dusk, when Arthur was crossing Morningside Park on his way home from his father's office.

He was in a very happy mood, for he was carrying a bunch of violets which he had bought for Amelia, knowing those fragrant little flowers to be her favorites.

He was not by any means near his full strength, but he stepped along with the briskness of health and the enjoyment of physical movement, but stopped suddenly at the sound of a swift footstep behind him and hearing his own name pronounced in peremptory tones.

He knew the voice, and his heart began to

beat violently as he turned and faced Charles Morgan.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I want a word with you," was the curt, ominous answer.

CHAPTER IV

ARTHUR'S heart beat violently when he found himself confronting Charles Morgan, and if he had followed his first impulse he would have turned and run away; but that was only the first impulse, and as he was very far from being a coward, he faced the other, head well up.

Both were silent for a few moments. Arthur waiting for Morgan to speak, and the latter slowly taking an up-and-down glance over him, a sneer gathering on his evil face.

"Oh, violets!" he said presently, his tone fairly charged with insult.

Arthur had been mastering himself, and was sufficiently under control now to simply look at Morgan without speaking; though there was a world of meaning in the way he slowly carried the bunch of violets to his face and inhaled their delicious odor.

"What are you going to do with those flowers?" demanded Morgan, driven into open anger by Arthur's appearance of nonchalance.

"Is that any business of yours?" Arthur demanded quietly.

"If I make it my business, it is; and I do make it my business. See here, young fellow, you and I might as well understand each other right away."

"I certainly would like to understand what you mean by stopping me and talking to me in this way," Arthur answered.

"Don't be afraid; I'll let you know," Morgan sneered. "Oh, you needn't look around for help; I shan't hurt you unless I have to."

Nevertheless, he took a step nearer to Arthur, and betrayed such malignity in his expression that his words were far more a threat than an assurance of peacefulness.

"I'm not afraid of you."

"Oh, aren't you? Well, you'd better be, for I'm the wrong sort of a man to run up against; and I take this opportunity to warn you of it. And I want to tell you that there's a certain house you'd better make it your business to keep out of as much as possible."

"Certainly," retorted Arthur indignantly, "you take a very gentlemanly way of making your wishes known. Do you suppose I would

be so mean spirited as to retire in the face of a threat, even if I would retire at all? You are a poor judge of human nature, Mr. Morgan."

"You're a worse, or you wouldn't anger me with your fool talk. Don't you know, you sorry excuse for a man, that I could handle you as I would a baby? Now, take my advice, and don't cross my path; it won't be healthy for you, if you do."

Arthur could have cried with rage at his own impotence. To think that he must stand there and listen to such words, unable to knock down the man who uttered them.

"You are stronger than I am now," he retorted passionately, "but the day will come when you will not dare address such language to me. If you were a gentleman you would not do it now; but I suppose it is all one should expect from such as you."

He turned as he ended, and moved on his way, his legs trembling under him, so great was his disturbance. Charles Morgan sprang fiercely after him and caught him by the arm with such a grip as told Arthur what strength the man had.

"Don't drive me too far," Morgan hissed,

his face distorted, and looking all the more evil for the half light it was in, "or I'll be tempted to give you a lesson now." He shook him as a terrier might a rat.

Arthur whirled about, livid with wrath at being so used, and, perhaps, the angrier that he felt himself so unequal to coping with the other.

"You cur, you coward!" he cried, and struck at Morgan with all his force.

But Morgan warded off the blow with an indifferent ease that was maddening in itself, and then threw Arthur from him as if he had been a child.

"You fool!" he cried, with a jeering laugh, "don't you know a man when you meet one? Count yourself lucky that I don't take you over my knee and spank some sense into you."

Arthur picked himself up from the grass, on which he had fallen, panting, and mechanically brushing his clothes.

"And mind you, Arthur Raymond, if you come calling at the Binghams' when I'm there, I'll give you a lesson before little Amelia, and one you won't forget in a hurry; and here"—he leaped forward as he spoke and

snatched the violets out of Arthur's hand—"give me those flowers! I'll show you!" He began tearing the bunch in shreds, when Arthur, with a cry of rage and despair, threw himself on the bully and tried to rescue his flowers.

"You will, will you?" hissed Morgan, and with a refinement of cruelty and malignity, caught Arthur as if he had been a child, and literally spanked him.

The man's strength, his own impotence, and the indignity, brought from Arthur's heart a sob of shame and humiliation, and he burst into tears as Morgan released him. He staggered against a tree, and there he stood, trying in vain to choke back the convulsive sobs, while Morgan laughed at him.

"You puny caricature!" sneered Morgan, "are you convinced now that I am the wrong person to fool with? Go find some other girl who will admire your good looks without caring whether you are a whole man or only a puny half one. I won't be crossed," he added, with the ferocity of a wild beast, "and if you don't take warning by what has taken place here, worse will happen to you. Keep out of my way, and I'll say nothing of taking

you over my knee; but if you try to brave it out, and come sneaking around Amelia, I'll make you the laughing stock of all your acquaintances."

Arthur stood silent, taking deep, convulsive breaths. Morgan passed him on the way across the park, but turned once to shake his finger warningly at him and to say: "Mind you, you whelp! I'm always better than my word."

He walked on, his head erect, his broad shoulders swaying slightly in harmony with his elastic, swinging stride, the perfect picture of a strong, stalwart athlete.

Arthur, still panting, still livid, still leaning weakly against the tree, gazed after him and noted these signs of masterful strength.

"My God! My God!" he moaned. "I am shamed and disgraced! How can I ever look at Amelia again? He will let her know, he is sure to, and I shall see her laugh at me. Oh, my God! My God! Why didn't I die rather than live to be like this? But I will shoot him! He shall not live to say he has so insulted me. I do not care what becomes of me; but he shall not live to laugh at me!"

He started off at a rapid, unsteady pace, so frantic with his shame and impotence that he recked nothing of being seen by strangers in such a disordered condition.

He was unconscious whither he went, excepting that it was away from home; but, fortunately, the park was almost empty, and it was now so dark that his features could hardly have been distinguished save by one close to him. Still his steps were so unsteady, his manner so wild, that he must have attracted attention if there had been anyone to see him.

"I will shoot him! I will shoot him!" he kept repeating to himself, though hardly conscious of the meaning of his words, for his emotions were all concerned with his humiliation.

"Arthur! Arthur! for heaven's sake what is the matter?"

He started, and stared, at the sound of the voice; and when he recognized Herbert Courtney in the speaker, he stopped and burst into tears. It was the culmination of his agony of mind.

Herbert was shocked and alarmed, fearing anything, and his thoughts naturally leaping

to Margie, he caught Arthur by the arm and cried anxiously:

"What is it, Arthur? Is—is anything wrong with—with Margie?"

"No," gasped Arthur, shaken with sobs, "nothing. Oh, let me go! Let me go! I hate myself! I hate myself!"

Reassured, but still alarmed and troubled, Herbert put his arm through Arthur's, and with a glance about to see which way was most clear of passengers, led him in that direction.

He walked slowly, and by his calmness and reserve force seemed to soothe Arthur, for the latter's sobs ceased in a little while, and he walked quietly and silently until Herbert spoke.

"What is the matter?" the latter asked as soon as he that felt Arthur was in a condition to speak with sufficient self-control.

Arthur hesitated. He had not meant to tell of his disgrace to anyone; but there was something in the strong, self-contained man by his side that gave such promise of help that he could not withhold his confidence from him. He began in broken phrases, and

with averted looks, and ended in tears and fierce denunciation.

Herbert listened with a growing sternness, with a growing pallor, with clenched hands and with tightly closed jaws. If Morgan had been there the disparity in their height and bulk would not have prevented Herbert Courtney from springing at his throat.

"The brute! The cur!" he interjected under his breath, as the recital was in progress. When it was ended he turned and caught both Arthur's hands in his, and cried warmly: "It was the act of a low-bred cur! The shame is his, not yours, Arthur."

"I'll shoot him! I'll shoot him!" Arthur cried passionately.

"You'll do nothing so cowardly, or so foolish," said Herbert promptly, master of himself in a moment as he saw how Arthur needed guidance. "What good would it do you to shoot him? And think of the harm!"

"He has degraded me! He can make me a laughing stock! He will tell Amelia, and she will laugh at me!"

"He has not degraded you, but himself. He cannot tell of what he has done without bringing more shame on himself than on you.

As for Amelia, she would turn to you at once with her sympathy if she knew of the mean advantage he had taken of a man still half sick; and, Arthur," he added, with slow, impressive gravity, "to shoot him would be the act of a coward; and you are not a coward."

"I will not rest under the insult! I will not! I will not!"

"I do not ask you to. If it would do any good, I would make your cause my own and force him into a fight; but that wouldn't set you right with yourself."

"Will anything set me right as long as he lives?" Arthur said gloomily.

"Would it not set you right to give him a dose of his own medicine?"

"A dose of his own medicine! What do you mean?"

"What if you were to whip him; whip him thoroughly?"

"I whip him!" cried Arthur, with all the bitterness of self-scorn.

"Why not?"

"I was a baby in his hands. Herbert, he is a giant in strength. You will never know the humiliation of the moment when he caught me in his hands and—Oh, my God! I cannot

think of it! But I was powerless; powerless, I tell you! I whip him?"

"I do not say to-day, Arthur, nor to-morrow; but I do say that if you will take the time you can build up a strength to which his is far inferior. I do say that if you will join a good gymnasium, and put yourself under the care of a competent instructor, you can learn to spar better than he can. You are as tall as he; you are endowed by nature with as good a frame; you are now free from disease. Would you really like to beat him at his own game?"

Arthur could not listen to the convincing tones of his sister's lover without being affected. Besides, the progress he had already made was such as to make him ready to believe that Herbert was not promising too much. He took the other's hand in his and pressed it with passionate warmth.

"I consider that already I owe you my life, Herbert," he said. "Set me in the way of accomplishing as much as you say, and I shall owe you my honor, without which my life is of little value. Tell me what to do."

"Remember, I promise nothing for to-morrow, nor next week, nor next month."

"If I know I am on the way I can wait."

"Can you wait a year, two years, three years, maybe?"

"So long?"

"You will be moving toward the goal all the time. It is a great result, Arthur, to begin with a man just off a sick bed, just saved from the grave, in fact, and in three years make him fit to cope with one of the best athletes, one of the best amateur pugilists in the country."

"And lose Amelia while I wait?"

"Is honor or Amelia most dear?"

"Honor!" was the passionate response. "What would Amelia care for me, dishonored, shamed?"

"Then don't let Amelia stand between you and honor."

"I can't give her up, either."

"Why need you? You can see her while you avoid him. You may win her love long before you are ready to try conclusions with him. Besides, you are only twenty; and if he wins Amelia, it will be because she loves him better than she loves you."

"You can talk calmly because you are successful in love."

"Never mind me, Arthur," Herbert laughed, "but tell me, do you want Amelia unless she loves you best?"

"No."

"Then why not let her make her own choice? Teach her to love you if you can, but be manly enough to rejoice in her happiness, even if some misery comes to you by the way."

"Rejoice if she gives her love to a man like Morgan?"

"If she is the kind of girl to love that sort of man she is hardly the sort for an honest, upright, manly fellow like you."

"As if a good woman could not love a bad man!"

"A weak and ignorant woman may. Weakness and ignorance are not goodness, though sometimes mistaken for it."

"Yours is an odd philosophy, Herbert. I wonder how well it would serve you if Margie were to throw you over. I think you'd squirm a little."

"My squirming has nothing to do with the correctness or incorrectness of my philosophy. Anyhow, I cannot comprehend a man wishing a woman who does not love him. If there is

anything in this world that should be free, it is love. For that matter, you cannot coerce it, if you will; but this has nothing to do with gymnasium work. What do you say? Shall I have you made a member of my club?"

"Morgan is a member."

"Morgan, I am happy to say, has resigned, and has joined our strongest rival, so that you will not meet him there; and he will know nothing about what you are doing."

"Then I'll join; and I'll work as man never worked before to be strong."

"And I'll be there to see that you don't overdo it," laughed Herbert, putting his arm through Arthur's, and so walking toward the Raymond house with him.

* * * * *

CHAPTER V

How far right was Herbert Courtney in saying that only a weak and ignorant woman would love an evil man? Well, ignorance is a word to cover a great deal of meaning.

If a savage torture his prisoners, and takes the life of his enemies by stealth, thereby following the custom of his kind, is he doing wrong? According to the code of the civilized man he is; according to his own code he is doing well, and naturally. Call him ignorant, if you will; but may you fairly call him weak, or imply that he is evil? There may be in the torturing, murdering savage the making of what we would call a high-minded gentleman. As he is, he is simply what his environment has made him.

Amelia Winsted was what her environment had made her. Good women have loved and married bad men. Charles Morgan went into Amelia's presence filled with a desire to please her, bringing all that was best in him to the surface so that he might win her.

Is it not the way of our world? Was he false and a hypocrite in doing as he did? Was Amelia any more open and frank than he? May she not have been pouting in her room, sulking over some grievance, the very minute before she went down smiling to greet him?

Is it not the destiny of girls to marry? Must they not let their suitors pass in review before them, so that they may make their choice? Shall a girl study phrenology and physiognomy and palmistry and graphology, and what not, so that she may get a look at the soul of the man who comes courting her?

No. Is it not rather a girl's business to be as stylish as possible, as good tempered as possible, as coy as possible, as winsome as possible? And if a man be handsome, and virile, and masterful, and successful in business, is a girl to go into psychology to find out if the man be all that he pretends?

Amelia had been brought up as other girls are. She had known few boys, and many girls. She had gone to school with girls, and played with them; and she knew them pretty well.

Boys and men? Well, they were delightful but unknown quantities. Wait until she was married; then she would know men.

In the meantime Charles Morgan was undeniably handsome, stalwart, masterful, devoted to her, successful in business. Other girls envied her when she went out with him, and she felt perfectly safe when her hand was on his arm. She had a comfortable assurance that when he was by her side she was safe from the real or imaginary terrors that lurked in the city streets.

She and Arthur had been playmates and friends all her life. She was three years younger than he was, which made them just the right age for good comradeship; but they had not been lovers in any sense of the word, although for a year or more before he was confined to the house through illness Arthur had been growing out of companionship into love for her.

It was while he was shut up in the house, dying, as almost everybody believed, that the strength and virility of Morgan had come into Amelia's life. Perhaps she did not know it, but it was true, nevertheless, that she was attracted to Morgan because he was such a

contrast to the poor, feeble, dying boy next door.

Then Arthur was saved almost with his foot on the threshold of death's door, and had entered into her life again, drawing on her sympathy by his weakness, having a place in her heart by reason of being an old playmate, and manifestly in love with her, and striving to win her to love him.

So there she was with two real lovers, attracted to the one by his virility, and to the other by his weakness; but she felt herself strong with Arthur, and weak with Morgan. Arthur amused her, and won her something as a child would by his honesty, ingenuousness and frank affection. She was always delighted to see him, but she generally had an engagement with Morgan when it came to going out for an evening, whether for a walk or to the theater; and yet she was ever more her sunny self with Arthur than with Morgan, and ever more a young lady with Morgan than with Arthur.

After the meeting of the two rivals in the park, Amelia was no longer entertained by their meetings in her parlor; but between them Amelia found all her spare time occupied.

Arthur had joined the Athletic club, and was working there regularly and steadily, but kept in check by Herbert. He had also taken up his work in his father's office, but only staying there for half a day. He gave as much of the remainder of his time as he could to besieging the heart of his pretty little neighbor.

He grew better and better in health, stronger and stronger in muscle, and he was sure that Amelia was taking him more seriously. She often went out walking with him now, and sometimes went to the theater. Instead of smiling with amusement at his fervid speeches, she more often blushed and looked the other way.

Arthur went deeper and deeper in love, and grew more assiduous than ever. He would have faced the man who had so humiliated him but for the insistence of Herbert that he must do nothing of the sort.

"Can you not see that you are winning Amelia?" he asked one day. "She goes out oftener with you than with Morgan, now. Win her first, and let that fellow do his worst afterward.

Arthur took his advice, and so it hap-

pened that Morgan saw nothing of Arthur, and was unaware of the strides he was making in health and strength; and Amelia no longer talked to Morgan of Arthur, avoiding the subject when Morgan tried to sound her on it. This was a good sign for Arthur, but, unfortunately for him, he knew nothing of it.

The weeks wore into months, and June had come around again. A great many times recently Arthur had tried to pluck up the courage to open his heart to Amelia, but it always seemed as if the right moment had not come.

One afternoon at the gymnasium the director stood watching Arthur as he went through a series of exercises on the parallel bars. A marvelous improvement had taken place in Arthur's appearance; he had filled out all over his body, especially about the chest and shoulders. To the director his progress had been one of the most interesting sights he had ever seen, and he was particularly anxious that nothing should happen to interfere with that progress.

"Stop a moment, Arthur!" he cried suddenly, "something's the matter with you.

Twice I've noticed your elbows give as you made a hand-stand on the bars."

Arthur went toward him, shrugging his shoulders. "Yes," he said, "I don't believe I'll do any more to-day."

"Not feeling ill, I hope?"

"No. A little disturbance; that's all."

The fact was he had said to himself that morning that come what may he would speak to Amelia that day. He had been unable to settle his thoughts on his work at the office, and had betaken himself to the gymnasium in the hope of working himself into a steadier condition.

He usually walked home, but to-day he took the elevated train so as to get to his destination in the shortest time possible; and when he was there he rushed to his room and changed his clothes, partly to do honor to Amelia, but partly to put off the crisis as long as he legitimately could.

As it was somewhat earlier than his usual hour for visiting her, Amelia was obliged to make him wait, for she, too, had to make a toilet in his honor. Arthur passed the time of waiting in pacing up and down the parlor until he heard that rustle on the stairs for

which his ears had been alert, and which always sent his heart into a flutter of expectation.

He sank quickly into a chair, trying to give himself an air of composure, and not succeeding in the least. Nearer, nearer came the rustle, while the light pitpat on the hardwood stairs told him Amelia was coming in her quick, childish way.

Then she stood in the doorway, holding the portiere in one hand, and peering into the room in a certain bird-like way that just suited her charming little figure, and which seemed to Arthur quite the most ravishing attitude ever a girl stood in.

And certainly she was a bewitching picture: rounded and plump as a partridge, with a perfect pink and white complexion, and a mass of golden curls to frame as pretty a face as the eyes of man ever looked at and adored. She had a mouth like a rosebud, and blue eyes that danced with innocent mirth most of her happy life, but which could take on an expression of pleading affection calculated to drive a lover to distraction.

"Oh! is it you, Arthur?" she said, quite as if she were surprised at seeing him there.

"Yes. I'm home earlier than usual, and—"

"Came in to see me to kill time," she pouted playfully, as she seated herself at the piano and rippled off a few bars of a popular song.

"No," answered Arthur, getting up suddenly and going over to her side, "I did not come to kill time, Amelia. You know I come here whenever I think you won't object; you know—"

Amelia, struck at once by an unwonted terror in his voice, had looked up at him, and found her heart beginning to beat furiously.

"Oh!" she interrupted hastily, and speaking at random, "who ever said I objected? This is one of Sousa's latest, have you heard it?"

She plunged into the performance of a march, and Arthur, breathing like a man who has had a respite from some sentence, listened —or had the appearance of listening—until she stopped and looked up.

"Amelia," he said, putting his hand on her arm.

"Oh! didn't you like it?"

"Amelia, I want to say something to you

of great importance to me. I—I have been thinking of it all day—all day! Why I've been thinking of it for months!"

"I—I don't think I have time now," murmured Amelia, making a futile attempt to rise, Arthur keeping her in her seat by a gentle pressure of his hand.

"Yes, Amelia, you must listen to me. You know what I am going to say; you must have seen the words on my lips a hundred times; you must have known what was in my heart. Oh! who could know you without loving you? I love you, Amelia dear; I love you! Oh, how I love you! Have you a word of hope for me?"

"Oh, Arthur; please!"

"Don't answer me yet," he cried in trepidation. "Listen to me first. I know very well I am not half good enough for you; but nobody is that. All I can say is that I love you, and will do anything, everything, to be worthy of you. I've loved you for so long, Amelia; long before you suspected it, I am sure, Amelia dear!"

She had risen in spite of the pressure of his hand, and was standing in front of him, her bosom heaving, her eyes down. His voice was

very pleading, and she found it hard not to look up and give him the answer he asked for; but she was in a cruel uncertainty about her own feelings.

"Oh, Arthur! I am so sorry," she murmured softly, "but I can't answer you; indeed, I can't."

"You love—love him?" he gasped.

"You ought not to speak like that, Arthur."

"No, I ought not, Amelia. I am sorry I said it. Forgive me, won't you? And oh, Amelia! I want you to know that I love you so much that I want you to be happy—the happiest you can be; and if loving somebody else will really make you happier than loving me, why—why—well, I'll try to be happy, too."

"I'm sorry I can't answer you, Arthur," she said regretfully. "We've always been such good friends. Why, the vert first thing I remember in my life is you drawing me in my little express wagon. Do you remember it?"

"Yes."

"And if I were sure, I would answer you now; but I'm not sure, Arthur, and I ought not say anything, ought I?"

"But you don't tell me not to hope?" he demanded eagerly.

"Oh no."

"And you don't think you love anybody else better? It isn't wrong to ask that, is it?"

"I—I don't think I love anybody else better. You must not make me say too much, Arthur. I—I don't know my own mind. Oh, mayn't I go upstairs, Arthur, and not answer any more questions?"

"Oh yes, Amelia."

"And you won't feel hurt?"

"No. You did say I might hope?"

"Oh yes, you may hope. You won't mind my going, please, Arthur?"

"No."

She looked up at him out of a pair of troubled eyes, and then fluttered out of the room, stopping at the door to flash back at him a bewildering glance that filled him with a hope her words had failed to convey.

He could not go home immediately after that interview, so went for a long walk, trying as he strode along to settle in his mind whether or not he might permit himself to hope.

Amelia, on the other hand, locked herself into her room and did the best she could to take stock of her feelings. Did she love Arthur, or not? Certainly he had never looked so noble and handsome as when he stood there telling her that he wished her to be happy at any cost to himself. Certainly she had never been so near loving him as then.

But did she love him? She felt a very delightful thrill run over her as she recalled the look in his brown eyes; and there had been a tremor in that rich baritone of his which had made her heart beat very quickly, and which was very pleasant to recall.

It came over her that if he had been masterful like Charles Morgan, and had taken her in his arms, as she was sure Charles Morgan would have done, she might be in his arms still, her flushed face on his breast, her heart beating in tune to his.

Ah, yes! that was the difference between them. Charles Morgan was so self-assured, so masterful, while Arthur was so diffident, so anxious to first be sure of her. A knock at her door disturbed her meditations finally, and she demanded to know who was there.

"Mr. Morgan is in the parlor, Miss Amelia," the maid said.

"Mr. Morgan at this time of day! Oh, I don't want—say I'll be down in a few minutes, Jane."

Amelia looked in her mirror, and received a very good report from it. She could not help knowing she was very pretty. Did she not, in fact, do everything she knew to make herself attractive? All her friends agreed that there wasn't a more stylish girl than Amelia Winsted to be found, and nature had been lavish.

"I wonder why he comes at this time of day?" she asked the pleasant face in the mirror. "It is very unusual. I hope, oh I hope—" She would not tell even her reflection what it was she hoped, but shaking her head doubtfully, went downstairs to see her masterful lover.

It is a proverb, if not a truth, that it never rains but it pours. The law of chances no doubt will explain why it is that when a thing happens, another thing of the same kind is very likely to follow.

Amelia had two lovers, between whom she had been hovering for some time, and whom

she had kept at a reasonable distance all the while simply because she was hovering. Arthur had been driven to action at last, and what more natural than that Morgan should have been similarly acted upon.

Anyhow he was waiting in the parlor to see Amelia, determined to ask her to be his wife, and feeling comfortably certain that she would not say no. He was very much in love with her, and had recently ascertained the amount of her father's fortune.

"Amelia!" he cried, stepping forward quickly as she came in, his voice as well as his black eyes telling her how much happiness there was for him in the sight of her.

He held her hand in a grasp so firm that she could not easily take it away from him, and so allowed it to remain in his while he led her to a seat. She almost sighed audibly as she thought how much more masterful he was than Arthur; and yet she really did like brown eyes the best.

She wondered why Morgan had come at such an unusual time, but she did not ask him, and he did not tell her at once. On the contrary, he got her into a very pleasant mood by telling her a number of entertaining

things about actors and actresses, and other persons in the public eye.

"But this isn't what I came up here to see you about," he said suddenly.

"Didn't you come to see me?" she asked archly, quite at her ease now.

"Indeed I came for nothing else," he answered fervently; "not that I come whenever I want to see you, for in that case I should be here all the time."

"I suppose you know how to make such pretty speeches because you are a lawyer."

"I assure you I don't always make pretty speeches in court," he laughed. "I talk from my head there and from my heart here."

"Oh!"

"But I don't always say there all that is in my head, nor here all that is in my heart. I'd like to, though."

"Well, won't they let you say all that's in your head in court?"

"Will you let me say all that's in my heart?"

There was such a look in his glowing black eyes that her heart came up with a leap into her throat. Was he going to ask difficult questions like Arthur?

"I don't know that I would care for that,"

she answered, trying to laugh. "Don't you want me to give you some music?"

"I want you to give me music all my life, Amelia. That is why I came up here this afternoon. I came up to tell you that I loved you and wanted you to be my wife. Ah! my little darling!" His arm was about her waist in spite of her terrified effort to keep him away. He was masterful, indeed. "You do love me, do you not?"

His face was nearing hers, his black mustache brushing her cheek, when a cry of despair broke from her lips,and she pushed his face away.

"No! no! no! You must not! Oh! I do not know whether I love you or not. I—I am afraid I do not. I don't know. Don't kiss me! I won't have you! Please let me go! Oh, Papa! He wants me to marry him, and I don't know!"

Her father had entered the parlor, drawn by her excited words, and now caught her in his arms. The reaction was a very grateful one to Amelia. She felt so very safe where she was, and a moment before, with the arm of Charles Morgan about her waist, she had felt like a bird caught in a net.

"You speak to him, Papa. Tell him I don't know yet; that I must think," she whispered to her father, while Charles Morgan looked on, seeking in his ready brain for the right word to say to the father who had come only just in time to save his daughter from the masterful man.

* * * * *

CHAPTER VI

"I LOVE your daughter, sir, and I believe I have reason to think she loves me," said Charles Morgan to Mr. Winsted.

Amelia had given him a glance half shy, half triumphant, as she flitted from the room.

"She has never said anything to me about it, and I do not know," replied Mr. Winsted, carefully.

"She is such a dear, shy little creature," said Morgan, feeling his way so as to know when to stop, "that I think she was frightened when I told her what I could no longer keep to myself. I love her, sir, and I am able to take care of her as she has been used to being cared for. You know I am a lawyer, and I think I am justified in saying I have the promise of great success."

"Amelia will decide for herself, Mr. Morgan. I shall only assure myself that the man of her choice is one calculated to make her a good husband. I had no idea that matters were so advanced as this. Indeed I did not

know that you—that she had what might be called a lover. I shall speak to her and hear what she has to say."

"I hope I have your good will, sir."

"At least you have not my ill will."

"I will call again to-morrow and hear what Amelia has to answer me. I would not hope for something favorable if I did not think I had some reason for doing so."

"I cannot say what Amelia's answer will be."

Morgan left the house cursing in his heart the father who had come in so inopportunely, but with his lips saying as many pleasant things as he could think of.

When he was gone, Mr. Winsted went to Amelia's room, where she was expecting him, and expecting him without any tremors, for if there was a man in the world she was not in the least afraid of, that man was her father. It is not an unusual thing for an American girl to feel that way toward her father.

"Well?" he said inquiringly, as he entered the room.

"Oh, do sit down!" she said, with the playful imperiousness of a spoiled child. "I

want to get on your lap. Now, then, you want to know all about it, don't you?"

"Why, I suppose I ought to, oughtn't I?"

"I don't know about the ought part of it, but I am going to tell you just the same. That was the second this afternoon."

"The second what? What do you mean?"

"The second proposal. Oh, you didn't know what a popular girl your little Amelia was, did you?"

"The second proposal! and you are—how old?"

"Seventeen."

"H'm! And who was the other infatuated young man.

"Arthur."

"Oh! And what did you tell him? You know I wasn't here at that proposal."

"I told him just what I told Mr. Morgan, that I didn't know. Why, I don't know. That is, I didn't know as well then as I do now; and now I don't say I am at all sure."

"Oh!"

"Don't sit here and say 'oh!' as if I had done something strange. How can I tell which man I love in such a hurry? I didn't know Arthur was going to say anything

about it this afternoon; and I'm sure nobody could have guessed that Charles Morgan would come up to-day, of all days, to propose to me. Oh! but I'm glad you came when you did."

"Are you? Why?"

"Well, if he'd kissed me, I do believe I'd have said yes. He has such a way of—of—well, having his way."

"H'm! and you would have been sorry if you had said yes to him?"

"I am afraid so."

"You like Arthur best?"

"Lately I think I do; but you know I haven't had time to think about it, and so I couldn't say; but I really do think that if Arthur had been as enterprising as Mr. Morgan I might have given him a little more hope, anyhow."

Mr. Winsted, who loved his daughter better than everything else in the world, frowned, got up, letting Amelia sit in the chair, and began to walk up and down the room. She watched him with great interest, knowing that he was pondering some problem, and that it would be useless for her to ask any questions until he was ready to answer them.

"My dear," he said at last, stopping in front of her with a very serious expression, "I have been thinking of something you ought to do."

"Nothing disagreeable, I hope. I am so afraid of the things I ought to do. They are almost always unpleasant."

"I have been thinking of this for some time, so that what you have just told me only has the effect of hastening my decision."

"Then it is something I must do whether I like it or not?"

"I think you will like it, my dear; I hope you will."

"Well, go on!"

"How would you like to go to Europe, London, Paris, Rome—anywhere—"

"Oh, Papa!"

"And leave these lovers without any answer until you come back?"

"Just a little hope, Papa?"

"Hope for both of them!"

"Well, a little for Arthur. He's an old playmate, you know. Though I don't want to say exactly no to Mr. Morgan. Don't you think he's handsome, papa?"

"Of a certain type." Mr. Winsted was a small, light man himself.

"And oh! he's awfully strong. He could pick you up as if you were a baby. That's the way he lifts me into a carriage."

Mr. Winsted rather resented the idea of being picked up by anybody. "For my part," he said, "I think he is very much less of a gentleman than Arthur. But you are to do as you please. We go to Europe, then, do we?"

"Of course we do, you dear, old Papa! And when do we go? Soon? I don't want to wait at all."

"Suppose I can get tickets for next Wednesday week?"

"Gracious! Oh do! What fun! I'll get Arthur to go down with us, and I'll have Mr. Morgan meet us at the steamer; and I won't see either of them till then—not alone, anyhow."

* * * * *

Arthur stood on the deck of the steamer, by the side of the dainty little creature, whose shining eyes and flushed cheeks betrayed her delight and excitement to the throngs that surged about them. Mr. Winsted, with a

kindly glance at Arthur, betook himself to the rail and looked down at the crowded wharf.

"You will let me write to you, Amelia, won't you?" Arthur asked, tremulously.

"Oh yes, I guess so. I wonder where papa is. Oh! there he comes!"

"And Amelia, you will write to me, won't you?"

"Yes, yes, I will. I will, Arthur."

"Mr. Morgan is coming to see you off, Amelia," said Mr. Winsted, carelessly enough, but with the same kindly glance at Arthur, as if to assure him on which side his sympathies were. "He is coming up the gang-plank now."

Amelia looked around helplessly for a moment, then drew a deep breath, and turned with a pleading smile to Arthur.

"You'll stay and see me off, won't you, Arthur?"

"Yes, indeed, I will."

And in his heart he was vowing he would remain with her until Charles Morgan left her, if he had to go to Europe to accomplish it.

"Oh, Mr. Morgan! How do you do? So kind of you to come down to see me off. And I know you must be busy, too. This is

Mr. Raymond; you must remember him. Mr. Raymond, Mr. Morgan. Thank you so much for the beautiful flowers, Mr. Morgan. It was so thoughtful of you. I shall enjoy them so much. Oh, Arthur, there is Maud, and some of the girls, too! Won't you bring them here?"

"I shall write to you, Amelia," said Morgan, half savagely, as Arthur turned to do her bidding, "and you will answer me, will you not?"

He was not pleading and humble, like Arthur, but almost imperative. Amelia, secure in the presence of so many of her friends, smiled sweetly up at him.

"I'll ask papa about it," she said. "Oh girls, I am so glad to see you! If I write to you, you'll write and keep me posted about everything, won't you?"

There was a clamor of acquiescence; there was a hurry of introductions to Charles Morgan; there was a babel of talk until the order came to go ashore.

Morgan scowled fiercely at Arthur, but Arthur ignored him completely, feeling ready to meet him now, not only in a crowded spot like this, but even in a lonely one, if necessary.

At the last moment, and just as the gang-plank was being drawn up, Morgan gave Amelia's hand a fierce pressure and darted away. Arthur followed him, his departure sweetened by a smile from Amelia.

"Curse you!" hissed Morgan in Arthur's ear, as they stood on the wharf, "I'll teach you a lesson you'll never forget. I should think you'd had enough."

"You cur and you coward!" was the contemptuous response.

"You dare not cross Morningside Park at eight o'clock to-night."

"I dare, and I will."

* * * * *

CHAPTER VII

HERBERT COURTNEY was a very happy man in these days; his employers had shown their appreciation of his faithful services by so increasing his salary that he felt himself justified in taking a wife.

Margie and he had talked the matter over, and the day had been set for the wedding. It was to take place some time in August, so that they might take advantage of Herbert's vacation to enjoy a few weeks in the country together.

He went to the house every night, now, and was on his way thither the evening after Amelia's departure for Europe. He was crossing the park, whistling softly because he was so happy, when suddenly a man darted out of the shadow of some rocks and came swiftly toward him.

He was too active and athletic to fear one man, even if as large as the one who strode toward him with a certain air of threatening, but he nerved himself to be

ready for whatever might happen, his eyes scanning the man with alert keenness.

All at once he recognized Charles Morgan; and it seemed that the latter recognized him at the same moment, for he gave a start, moderated his pace, and dropped into a slow, sauntering gait that was too obviously forced to be natural.

"Good evening," he said in his insolent way.

"Good evening," was Herbert's curt rejoinder, for he disliked the man, and was at no pains to disguise his feelings.

They passed each other without further word, and Herbert would probably have forgotten the matter, preferring to dismiss such a disagreeable subject from his thoughts, but for meeting Arthur a few moments later. Indeed their meeting must have been within sight of Charles Morgan.

"Hello, Arthur!" he cried, cordially. "Out for a walk?"

"Yes. I thought I'd take a little walk. Margie's out on the stoop, waiting for you."

I believe I am a little later than usual," said Herbert, preparing to hurry on. "Good

night! Oh! by the way, did you see Amelia off this morning?"

"Yes, I went with the rest of the world."

"Too many around to suit you, I suppose," laughed Herbert, passing on. "Well, I hope you'll have a pleasant walk."

"Thank you, I think I shall."

They separated, and Herbert quickened his pace as he thought of the woman he loved waiting for him. Then he suddenly stopped and looked back after Arthur.

"That fellow Morgan is up to no good," he murmured, "and Arthur acts as if he had more on his mind than Amelia's absence. I wonder— By gracious! It would be just like the foolish boy to have a set-to with Morgan if he met him and had words with him."

That thought decided him. He hurried swiftly after Arthur, and came upon him just as Morgan stepped again out of the obscurity of a shadow. Neither of them noticed him, but rushed at each other at once; and then he knew that the meeting had been preconcerted.

He groaned in his despair. He knew Arthur was not fit to meet Morgan yet; and he

knew, too, that it would be quite in Morgan's style to take advantage of the irregular meeting and of the darkness to practice foul play to seriously injure Arthur.

There could be no hesitation with such a thought in his mind; besides, the two men had grappled, and were struggling fiercely already. He sprang at them, and at no small risk to himself caught each one by a shoulder, crying angrily:

"Stop this! Arthur, let go your hold. Charles Morgan, stop! I'll strike you if you don't let go your hold. By all that's sacred I will. Stop!"

He was too manifestly in earnest to be doubted, and both contestants loosed their holds and fell back from each other, Arthur crying out bitterly:

"Go your own way, Herbert. You have no right to meddle in this."

"I'll make the right, then," Herbert answered firmly.

"Ah!" sneered Morgan, having recovered himself, and ready to wound with his tongue, since nothing else was left him to do. "Do you think I don't see through your little game? It was very clever of you, little Ar-

thur. You don't want another spanking, of course."

"Do you hear him?" cried Arthur, almost with a sob. "Do you think I will stand that? By heaven! I will show him he has no boy to deal with now. Leave us alone, Herbert, or you are no friend of mine."

"One moment!" said Herbert, sternly. "This fight shall not take place here. That man Morgan lies when he says anything to imply cowardice in you, and he lies deliberately. Oh, you need not start out at me; I am not afraid of you, least of all at a rough and tumble, and you know it. Herbert Courtney's reputation is safe even from your foul tongue."

Morgan had stepped threateningly forward, but at the other's cold cutting words he clenched his fists and bit his lip. He did know Herbert Courtney's reputation for courage was beyond injury from him; and he knew too, that in a rough and tumble fight a man must be active indeed to worst him. With gloves on, in the arena, the case would have been different.

"I have no quarrel with you," he said hoarsely, "but with that whelp of a boy I

have a quarrel that needs satisfying and neither you nor anyone else can interfere between us without coming to harm. So mark my words, and leave us to settle our quarrel by ourselves."

"Go on, Herbert," said Arthur. "You have no right interfering. I am able to take care of myself. He'll find a year has made some difference."

"No," said Herbert, in a tone that was final, "I would not leave you here if I knew that man was honorable and to be trusted; and knowing him as I do, I would not go away without you, Arthur, if I knew I was making you an enemy for life."

"What do you mean to insinuate?" cried Morgan, fiercely. "Be a little careful how you talk, or you'll find I'm not so sure of my temper as you seem to think."

"Bah!" said Herbert, contemptuously. "Will you consent to put your hands up and walk to the first light there to let yourself be searched? Will you give your word beforehand that you have no concealed weapons on your person?"

A horrible oath burst from Morgan's lips, and it seemed for a moment as if he con-

templated throwing himself on Herbert. Nor was it from cowardice that he did not, for he was brave enough; but he was too cold and calculating to do a foolish thing, and he knew that under the circumstances it would be the height of folly to attack one of those men with the other there to insure fair play; for the truth was that he had in his pocket a pair of brass knuckles, with which he had intended to deal Arthur a blow.

"It takes a cur to think of a dirty thing like that," he said, interlarding his speech with oaths. "You know that no man with a spark of self-respect would consent to do what you ask; but there are two of you, and even two cowards are wrong odds for any one man. As for you, little Arthur, I'll have you over my knee again just as sure as you live."

"I'm ready to meet you now or any time," Arthur answered. "It is not my fault that he is here; but after what I've heard, I want to say that if ever we do meet it will be in the light, and with people enough around to see fair play."

"That sounds like a challenge," said Morgan, with a jeering laugh.

"Take it for such, if you like," Arthur answered hotly.

"Do you mean you'll put on the gloves with me, and stand up like a man?" cried Morgan, with fierce joy.

"When he's in your class he will, and not a day sooner," interposed Herbert. "You know very well that he wouldn't be allowed to put on the gloves with you in any reputable club; and he doesn't go inside any of the disreputable ones as long as I'm around to prevent it."

"Oh, well, little Arthur," sneered Morgan, "you fix it with your nurse; I'm ready any time. In the meanwhile, look out for yourself, for I'll down you if I die for it."

"A criminal lawyer ought to know better than to threaten before witnesses," said Herbert, linking his arm through Arthur's and drawing him away.

Arthur went reluctantly, but he went because it was perfectly plain that Herbert would not leave him there alone. Moreover, his first fierce anger with the latter had gone, for he had been enabled to see, through what passed between Herbert and Morgan, that he had done a foolish thing in meeting him there alone.

"I hope you are no longer angry with me, Arthur," Herbert said, when they had gone a short distance together.

"I am not angry, but I wish you had not interfered. I could have given a good account of myself."

"To what good end? He is the better man, even if he had used fair means; and I know perfectly well that he would not have done so. He knows that I am acquainted with the rumors that were floating around about him two years ago, when he was suspected of having used brass knuckles against a man he was at odds with. The thing wasn't proved, but he was always believed guilty."

"Well," said Arthur, "the thing's got to be settled some day; I know that."

"Then let it be settled inside a rope, with a good, strong light on you both, and with plenty of witnesses; but you won't be fit for a year to come, and you might as well make up your mind to it. But don't let us talk about this any more now. Have you ever thought of your brother's terrible condition, Arthur?"

"Have I? Sometimes it seems to me as

if I should go crazy, too, if I could not do something to get rid of that awful weight on my poor mother. It is wearing on father, too; but it is mother who has to bear the brunt of it."

As Herbert had known, he had chosen the one subject most likely to take Arthur's thoughts most certainly away from Morgan. Besides, since he was almost a member of the family, he could not help taking an interest in whatever concerned it.

As for Arthur, he had at one time looked upon his poor, demented brother as simply a horror; but that was in the days when it seemed as if death was claiming him, and his views of all things in life had been warped. Now, however, pity alone moved him when he thought of the madman who spent so much of his wretched life chained to the wall of his lonely room; and, of late, he had given no little thought to the problem of how he could do something to lift the terrible pall that hung over and clouded the mind of his brother.

"Have you considered," asked Herbert, "that it might be that the system of natural cure that snatched you back from the grave

you had been doomed to by modern science might do something for Robert?"

"Yes, I have thought of it, and have spoken to mother about it; but you know how unreasonably she refuses to believe that I was helped by anything but that old humbug's medicine."

"Yes, I know she is firm in her belief in Dr. Brayton; but what did she say when you suggested the new way?"

"Said she would speak to the doctor about it. I told her that was useless, but she answered me that I was wrong to doubt his ability after he had cured me. She said that it was folly for me to put my ignorance in competition with his knowledge."

"Alas! it is his ignorance that we have to compete against."

"Old fool!" cried Arthur, hotly. "He knows he is a fraud. When he was at the house the last time, I tried to discuss the subject with him."

"And with what result?"

"He smiled that big, bland smile of his, and asked me in his suavest tones what I supposed was the use of all the knowledge and research of the medical profession if it

were not better than the ignorance of a man who pretended that by working a few muscles he could cure anything."

"And of course your mother was impressed by that way of putting it?"

"Of course. But I asked him if it was not the way of his profession to decry every new thought that offered itself. I asked him if the profession had accepted Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood when it was promulgated by him."

"What did he say to that?"

"Oh, he smiled, and patted me on the back, and said, in his fat way—I can't call it anything else—'Oh, Arthur, my boy, somebody has been beguiling you with calumnies.' Do you know, Herbert, I don't believe he ever heard of Harvey before. Then I asked him if he could remember how the old school had fought homeopathy, at the same time stealing no end of ideas from it."

"How did he get out of that?"

"Same old way. Smiled, and would have patted me on the back, but I got out of the way so he couldn't. He said he believed they had learned something from homeopathy. What do you think that was?"

"I don't know."

"He said that when they saw that people who really were sick didn't die when nothing but sugar and water were given them, they knew that it was not necessary to give so much medicine. To use his own words, that from watching the homeopaths they had learned a great deal of the natural history of disease. What do you think of that?"

"I think they might do a little more watching; but did he say nothing about Robert?"

"A lot. He said he was hopelessly insane; that there was a tumor pressing on some part of the brain, and a lot more. He talked himself nearly breathless and rung in something like this. I'll give it to you as I remember it: 'Under normal conditions these several sets of neurons are physiologically associated, and motor impulses arising in the cells of the sensori-motor cortical areas are transmitted through their processes to the cerebral motor neurons, and thence by the spinal motor neurons to the periphery.' What do you think of that?"

"I suppose he was afraid to say it in plain English for fear his ignorance would

be discovered. Do you think he understood what he was saying, himself?"

"I only know that he declared Robert incurable, and laughed at the idea of his being helped by our natural method. I sometimes think the doctors would rather a patient would die by their pathy than live by any other."

"I don't think it is as bad as that, Arthur; but it is certain that thousands of young men study medicine only because it is a respectable way of getting a living, and not because they have any love for it, or aptitude. For them the study of medicine is a farce. They do not learn even what is taught in the schools, and never learn anything afterward, but are graduated and turned loose on a confiding world, permitted by law to commit murder by drugs. To them a new idea is like a red rag to a bull; they hate progress; they fear innovation; they try to hide their ignorance in a torrent of words."

Arthur laughed. "You certainly are giving them a certificate of character, Herbert. Is that all?"

"Well, I only want to say that if a layman advances the best and most helpful suggestion

imaginable, the doctors will decry it on principle; but if the famous Doctor So-and-So writes a paper, and reads it before his medical society, saying that clay heated to five hundred degrees centigrade, allowed to cool, and then made into pills, is a sovereign remedy for insomnia, every little drug doser in the country will be dealing out clay by the ton, without ever raising a question."

They were almost at the house by this time, and the conversation ended with the statement by Arthur that he would not rest until he had found somebody who had something better than hopelessness to offer them.

* * * * *

CHAPTER VIII

ARTHUR had supposed that Amelia would remain away during the summer and return in the fall, but Mr. Winsted had purposely arranged his business affairs so that he need not return until it pleased him to do so. The consequence was that a year passed, and the second summer was running into another autumn before Amelia wrote Arthur that she was coming home.

It was a joyous word to Arthur, who was longing with all the fervor of an ardent lover to see her sweet face again. The time had not, indeed, been wasted by him, for he had devoted himself so faithfully and with such judgment, to the upbuilding of his body that he had become an almost perfect athlete.

When he passed along the street now, men and women always gave him a second glance, even if they were not well enough informed to appreciate his magnificent physique, for there was a singular charm in his alert, springy step, in his well-poised head,

his clear brown eyes, and in his general air of easy confidence to take care of himself in any emergency.

He had had temptation enough to withdraw his love from little Amelia; for with his superb health and marvelous strength had come that subtle, magnetic quality to which the opposite sex is so sensitive, and he had become such a favorite that his attentions would have been welcomed in more than one quarter.

But Arthur never wavered in his love for the absent beauty, and the constant correspondence they maintained served to keep her always in his thoughts.

He was now taking his full share of the work in his father's office, perhaps more than his share measured in the ordinary way; but he was so full of vitality that he never tired, and got through an amount of work that made his father marvel.

It made him rejoice, too, for he felt that the time was not far distant when he would drop out and leave Arthur the sole prop of the family. He had heart disease, and looked upon himself as a doomed man; and although Arthur pleaded with him to at least give his

method a trial, Mr. Raymond only shook his head obstinately, and used the time-worn argument of those who will not change:

"If those who have studied such matters cannot cure me, how can you suppose anyone else can?"

Arthur never quite gave up hope of influencing his father to make a trial of the natural method, but no longer urged him to try it, confining himself to calling his attention to the benefit that others derived from it.

And, indeed, in their own home there had been a marvelous example of the effects of physical culture, combined with that rational living, which, by preventing disease, renders cure unnecessary.

When Herbert and Margie had been married they had gone into a little suite of rooms, with the intention of keeping house; but before long they had been coaxed to come back to the old home, where Margie was greatly missed, and where Herbert had become a prime favorite.

Between Herbert, Margie and Arthur they had brought about a revolution in the matter of meals, so that there were now served but two meals a day. Mr. Raymond ate three

meals a day, but took his mid-day meal down town; Mrs. Raymond, more in loyalty to her doctor than for any other reason, insisted on eating at noon, but made a very perfunctory meal of it.

But this was a trifle compared with the truly revolutionary conduct of Herbert in regard to Margie. Before their marriage he had converted her to his physical culture ideas to the extent of inducing her to throw away her corsets and to the taking of considerable exercise; but after their marriage nothing would satisfy him but that she should exercise systematically, and with a view to making herself an athlete.

Margie, in the exuberance of her health and spirits, which she knew she owed largely to Herbert's directions, fell in with his notions with enthusiasm; but even she was startled at last. She was even incredulous.

It was one evening, a few months after their marriage, that they were sitting together in their own room, whither Margie had taken Herbert after dinner, on the plea of talking over an important matter.

"What," said Margie, nestling close to him as they sat together on a little sofa in front

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of an open grate fire, "what would you rather have than anything else in the world? You are to search your heart carefully, you know, and give me a truthful answer. What would you rather have than anything else?"

"I don't have to stop to think much about that," he answered, drawing her closer to him, "I would rather have you."

"Stupid!" she cried, with pretended petulance, "you have me. I mean something you haven't yet. Think hard!"

He started and looked hard at her, murmuring questioningly:

"Oh, Margie?"

"That isn't answering my question at all," she cried, blushing shyly.

"Oh, Margie! Do you mean it? Is it true? Oh, Margie! Margie!"

She nodded her head a great many times, and let it finally fall on his breast. "It is true, Herbert, dear."

For awhile nothing more was said, as if they were enjoying the happiness that was in prospect for them; but at last Margie said regretfully:

"I suppose now I ought to stop my exercises."

"Oh, no! no! no!" he answered vehemently. "Now is the time to prove their value. You must go on and add new ones for this special emergency."

"But, Herbert, dear, you know all doctors agree that a woman should be very careful at such a time."

"And so she should, but not in the way they mean. Why, Margie, the reason mothers have such a terrible time is just because of the folly of the doctors, who will not see that the function of motherhood is absolutely a physical one, and must be treated as such."

"But, Herbert, dear," she protested gently, "you know I agree with you in all your ideas about natural methods, but how can you know more about such a thing as motherhood than the men who have made a life-long, a century-long, one may say, study of it? I am sure, besides, that no doctor would dream of calling it anything but a purely physical function."

"Yes, they would call it so, but they would treat it as a sort of mystery, and not as they would any other physical function. Come, now, Margie, if you were told that in a given number of months you must climb up a rope,

hand over hand, would you sit down and let the muscles of your arms grow soft and flabby and useless? Would you call that rational preparation?"

"Of course not. I would take such excercises as would strengthen the particular muscles to be used. I think, in fact, that I would be inclined to neglect other muscles in order to be sure of being on the right side."

"Well, then, is motherhood a matter of muscles and tendons and bones, or not?"

Margie looked at her husband in profound admiration.

"How simple it seems when you put it that way!" she cried. "But why have not physicians thought it out along those lines?"

"Oh, physicians generally don't think; they only practice. They don't have time to think, and they don't have inclination to, either. Ask any physician, and he will tell you of marvelous cases of mothers here and there who have given birth to children and then been at their work within a day or two; and it is a well-known fact that among the American Indians it is customary for a woman to step aside from the route the tribe is traveling, give birth to her child, and then

catch up, and go on as if nothing had happened."

"Really, Herbert?"

"Yes. And among many peoples childbirth is not considered a painful or dangerous operation. With the lower class Chinese and Japanese women, for example, children are born almost as a part of the day's work."

"But if physicians know this, why don't they make it the basis for finding some relief for us?"

"I don't wonder you ask, for that is what any layman would ask; but the physician, seeing the difficulty, looks to drugs to help him out of it. Such a thing as putting the muscles, tendons, joints, membranes and fibers in order for the function never occurs to him. Speak to Doctor Brayton about it if you want to hear a hearty laugh."

"And you really know how to prepare me for the event which women always dread so?"

"Yes, I know how."

"But you don't mean I can get up in a day?"

"I mean just that."

"And I shall not suffer much?"

"Very little, if at all."

"And if I get up, and go about my duties within a day or two, I shall not become a victim to those terrible internal troubles that are the almost common lot of women?"

"Of course you will not; and you will know that yourself. I shall not urge you to move until you are ready to do so."

"But, Herbert—you know I am not objecting out of obstinacy, don't you?—I am quite sure that I have read or heard that the Indian women are very much troubled with uterine ailments."

"I don't say they are not. I used them only to show that with them child-birth is nothing more than an incident of a day's march. If they do not recover tone at once, it is because they know nothing about the laws of health, and have not prepared for recovery. It seems to me it is a pity if we cannot improve on the knowledge of savages."

"Of course that is true."

"Besides," he went on earnestly, "this is not a theory of mine, but a fact, of which you will be assured in your own case. Of course it is not possible to draw a parallel between the human animal and the lower

animals, generally, because the conditions of their existence differ so widely; but it is worth noting that with the wild animals the birth of young offers no more than a momentary interruption of the activities of life; while with domesticated animals, the more highly they are bred—which means the more artificial their lives are—the more they suffer. Jersey cows, for example, often die in giving birth to their calves."

"You don't need to say any more, Herbert; I will do whatever you tell me to. What you say is so reasonable that I would be foolish to doubt. Besides, if I do not feel well enough to do all you say, I need not attempt it."

With this understanding the new exercises began. Herbert procured for Margie a book on the subject, which she studied so as to be able to co-operate intelligently with him in the exercises he prescribed.

The result was that Margie passed through the trying months that followed the revelation of her sweet secret absolutely free from the hampering restrictions which usually surround the human mother; going about her work and play and exercise with the freedom of a girl.

And when the long-expected day came, instead of the anxious waiting, the hushed household, the general distraction, the fearful anticipations, there was only an hour's warning—that hour being one of mild sickness—before a lusty girl came protesting into the world, crying with a power that told of good lungs.

Doctor Brayton, Herbert would not have, but in deference to the wishes of Mrs. Raymond had called in the services of a Doctor Walden, who had been sent for at the first note of warning, and reached the house about two hours after little Gertrude's birth, and just as Margie was proposing to get up.

"Get up now?" he had cried in horror; "three weeks at the very least; I will not listen to anything else."

"But I am perfectly well," Margie protested. "Feel my pulse; try my temperature."

The doctor did both, and found temperature and pulse normal; but he said that was not altogether unusual, and that the disturbance would betray itself later.

He was so insistent, and Mrs. Raymond upheld him so strenuously, that Margie

yielded against her wish. That night, and again the following morning, the doctor tested the young mother for febrile disturbance, and was nonplussed to find none.

"Now," said Margie, firmly, as soon as he was out of the house, "I am going to have my own way. I know I am strong enough to get up, and I am going to do it. It's no use to try to dissuade me mother; Herbert was right in all he said to me; I feel quite well now, but I shall not if I remain in bed for three weeks."

So she got up, and from that moment attended to her duties as buoyantly as if nothing so momentous had happened to her. Doctor Walden severely reprimanded her, called her a victim of a delusion, ordered her into bed again, sent in his bill, and never came again.

But Margie tripped lightly about her work, sang blithely to her baby, and acted generally as if she thought life a particularly joyous affair.

Arthur made this the text of many talks with his father, and the latter was always ready to agree that the natural method was just the thing for Margie, and had worked

wonders with her, as it had with Arthur; but nothing moved him from his hopeless attitude toward himself.

"It's no use, Arthur," he would say, "I don't say a young man might not be cured even of heart disease by your way, but it is absurd to think of anything doing me good."

Mrs. Raymond, accepted the dictum of her oracle, Doctor Brayton, watched Margie for months with piteous anxiety, expecting to see her suddenly give out, and forever wondering why it did not happen.

"I don't understand it," she would say to her husband. "It is all a mystery to me. It isn't what I've been used to."

CHAPTER IX

"The Lucania reported off Fire Island."

That was the word that was brought to Arthur one September morning, and which made him start up from his desk with a cry of joy. There was a little lady on board that steamship whom he wished dearly to see.

It had been a matter of anxious thought with him how he should contrive to see her before Charles Morgan had the opportunity to do so. He had seen nothing of his rival in some time, but he never doubted that Morgan was as well informed as he of Amelia's coming.

Then one day he learned from a wealthy member of the athletic club that he was expecting his father and mother on the Lucania, and meant to go down the bay in a tug to meet them.

"Oh, mayn't I share the expense, and go with you?" Arthur had cried eagerly. "I have a friend coming on the Lucania, and I would give my head to get down the bay and welcome h—h—him."

"Him, Arthur?" the other had cried gayly. "Own up."

"Her father's with her," Arthur had answered.

"Come along," his friend had said with a laugh, "but don't talk about sharing the expense. The tug is chartered, and I'd have to pay for her whether you went or not. I'll send you word when the Lucania is reported off Fire Island. Then come to the club, and we'll go together."

That is why he bought a handful of exquisite pinks, Amelia's second choice in flowers, and hurried to his friend at the club.

Amelia was standing with her father by the rail, looking eagerly at the familiar sights in the approaches to New York, her exclamations betraying how glad she was to be home once more.

"Amelia!" said a voice from behind her, "welcome home!"

She turned swiftly, a wondering look in her blue eyes; perhaps a little expectation, too.

"Arthur! Arthur!" she cried, putting out both hands to him. "Oh, how glad I am to see you! How did you get here? Papa! Here's Arthur!"

Then followed a handshaking, and more words of welcome, such as made Arthur feel that the deck he stood on was nothing less material than clouds. Then, all at once, Amelia cried out, in a tone that was all admiration:

"But how well you look! Doesn't he, Papa?"

But papa, like a man who would do as he wished to be done by, had wandered abstractedly off, and was pointing out the beauties of our bay to an Englishman who was making his first visit to this country.

"You are looking well, too," said Arthur, with such a look in his eyes as made Amelia cast hers down for a moment; but that only showed Arthur what exquisite eyelashes she had.

"But you are so big and strong, and—and"— Handsome was what she had on her tongue to say, but did not—"and well."

"I couldn't get any violets," Arthur said, "but here are some pinks. I remembered you liked them second best."

She took them with a little cry of delight, as if she had not seen them from the first and buried her face in them, inhaling

their spicy fragrance, and looking slyly over them at the athletic form of her lover.

"How nice of you to remember. I do love carnations! You do look so well!" Again she meant handsome, but did not dare to say it.

In fact she did not find it nearly as easy to talk to Arthur now as before. It was very certain that she could not treat him as lightly as she had the nice boy she had left behind her. It seemed to her that something she had never noticed before emanated from him and seemed to enfold her as in a subtle essence.

"Yes, I am well," he said, looking so wistfully at her that she was taken with a panic lest he should say something there and then that she was not ready to make answer to. She hastened to say:

"Do tell me about Margie and the baby. Are they well? Is little Gertrude pretty? And good? Oh, how eager I am to see her! She doesn't walk, yet, does she? Oh, of course not. How could she? She isn't old enough, of course. When do babies walk, generally?"

"When they're about a year old, I think," answered Arthur, thinking he had never listened to such a voice, never looked into such

blue eyes, never seen a form he would so like to hold close to his breast.

"Think of you knowing anything about babies! But I suppose you hear nothing else but baby now. Margie is real well, is she?"

"Couldn't be better. It doesn't seem nearly fifteen months since we said goodby, does it? I don't know what I should have done if it hadn't been for your letters. It was very good of you to write to me."

His voice had sunk low, and had a peculiar pleading tone. Both were leaning on the rail, apparently looking intently at Fort Wadsworth.

"I wrote because I wanted to," she said in a tone as low as his own, and with a little quaver of unsteadiness in it.

"There was one question you did not answer," he said.

"Oh! was there?" she murmured, as if greatly surprised and wondering.

"Yes, there was. Will you answer it now, Amelia?"

He had never dreamed of such a thing as pushing his suit at such a time; and if she had suspected that it would come to this a few minutes before, she would have sought

refuge in her stateroom rather than endure it. Now, however, it seemed as if nothing else could have happened.

She wanted to run away now, but wouldn't have done it for the world, because she really found it very delightful to be met in this way by Arthur. She looked straight ahead of her, her breath coming and going quickly.

"Amelia," he pleaded, "can't you give me the answer now? I didn't come down here to ask you for it; I only came because I couldn't see you soon enough; but when I stand here by your side I can't help myself; I must ask you for your answer, Amelia, dear?"

"You know very well you ought not to ask me now, Arthur."

"Yes, I do know it; but I can't help it."

His hand was on hers, pressing it with a passion he was not fully conscious of. She looked quickly up at him and then away again.

"Suppose anybody were to see you, Arthur?" she said softly.

Something in her tone made him cry out and catch his breath. He looked at her averted face.

"Amelia! Look at me! Oh, look at me!"

"Somebody will surely hear you, Arthur."

"But look at me!"

She breathed quickly, but turned her face slowly toward him so that he could look into her eyes.

"Is it true? Do you?" he demanded, breathlessly, incredulously.

"You won't do anything to make people look?" she demanded.

"No! no! I won't. Do you Amelia? Do you—do you—love me?"

"I'm pretty sure I do," she answered.

"Oh! Somebody will see you, Arthur!"

"But aren't you certain?" he demanded.

"Ye-es."

"Oh, Amelia!" He crowded very close to her and squeezed her hand very hard.

"I do think somebody will notice you, Arthur—dear," she said softly.

"Oh, I've never seen your stateroom," he said suddenly.

"Would it be proper?"

"Hang propriety! Ask your father."

"Papa!" she called obediently; and when he came to her: "Do you think it would be

improper for me to show Arthur my stateroom?"

Mr. Winsted hesitated.

"We're engaged," Arthur said in an explanatory tone.

"Oh! Glad of it, Arthur; glad of it. Improper? No. Go ahead! I'm glad of it, my boy, glad of it. That fellow Morgan has hung like a nightmare over me."

"Poor papa!" murmured Amelia. "Whenever I wanted him to do something he didn't like, I said something about Mr. Morgan. Mr. Morgan has been his *bête noir*."

"You're a wicked, heartless creature!" said Mr. Winsted, with a wink at Arthur to assure him that she was really just the opposite of what he called her. "Take her away and punish her for her wickedness, Arthur."

"When did you decide?" Arthur asked.

They were standing together in Amelia's stateroom, his arms quite around her plump little body, his lips very close to hers, much as if they had been closer yet.

"About fifteen months ago, I think."

"And you have kept me in suspense all this time?"

"I wasn't absolutely, perfectly sure."

"But you are now?"

"I think so."

"That won't do."

"Arthur! This hat cost ten guineas in London! You must be careful! Why, I had no idea you would be so—so—"

"Loving? But are you perfectly sure now, or shall I endanger that ten-guinea hat again?"

"I'm perfectly sure. There! I'm sure folks will wonder what is the matter with my hat. I know it isn't on straight."

"And I know that it is on just as it should be, and that you are the most bewitching creature in it that ever existed."

"Really? Do I look well in it?"

"In it, or out of it, there is no one comparable with you!"

"Arthur!" she said, with the suddenness and seeming irrelevance of a woman, "do you think Mr. Morgan will be at the wharf?"

"Does he know you are coming?"

"I only wrote him three times while I was away," she answered. "You won't mind that, now, will you?"

"Not in the least."

"I wish I hadn't done it now," she sighed ruefully.

"Why?"

"Because I think he will be there to see me. I'm a little bit afraid of him, Arthur. He is masterful, isn't he?"

Arthur smiled quietly. "I don't know yet. I expect to find out some day soon."

"What do you mean?" she cried, in alarm.

"Only that his club and mine have arranged a friendly bout for the championship, and that he represents his club, and I represent mine. I suppose you won't care to see it, will you?"

"To fight, Arthur?"

"Oh no! Only to spar for points."

"I don't know what that means; but I am so afraid you'll be hurt. He is so strong and masterful, Arthur."

"Not strong and masterful enough to win you from me."

"Not really; but I was awfully afraid of him. I wish you had an engagement ring for me to wear."

"Will you wear this seal ring until I can get another?" he demanded quickly. "It is small for my little finger, and will be much too large

for you; but if you would use one of your rings for a guard I'm sure it would stay on."

She pulled off the ring that was on the third finger of her right hand, and held out her left hand to Arthur, who slipped his ring on the third finger. It was much too large, but her ring held it on.

Then there was the mystic ceremony with which lovers always bind an engagement ring on, and which only lovers can guess at, and afterward they went up on deck to see the steamship make her wharf.

Almost the first foot on the gangplank was that of Charles Morgan. He made his way through the throngs of passengers and searched until he found Amelia.

She was talking with Arthur, and one little hand was ostentatiously displaying the seal ring that loosely encircled her third finger. Morgan was close upon them before he saw them, and he took in the full significance of the scene.

He knew that Arthur had stolen a march on him; that he had snatched his prey away from him. He turned livid with passion, and ignored the little hand that was held out to him.

"You will cross my path," he gasped hoarsely. "This is a quarrel to the death! Remember that!"

"Oh, Arthur!" murmured Amelia, turning pale, "I am afraid of him."

"I am not, dear."

CHAPTER X

"Oh, Margie! I'm so afraid!"

"Afraid? What are you afraid of, Amelia?"

"Suppose that man Morgan should hurt Arthur?"

"But Herbert says they can't really injure each other. The worst that can happen is a knockout blow."

"Oh, I wish I hadn't come! I wonder why men like such rough, brutal games. I suppose it is a kind of game, isn't it?"

The robust, muscular young matron looked down at the frail, pretty little creature by her side and laughed.

"What a little ignoramus you are, Amelia!" she said. "Sparring isn't exactly what you would call a game; it is a sport, though, and Herbert says that when it is conducted fairly, as a sport, and not as a money-making business, it is as elevating as any other form of athletic exercise, and not as brutal as some other sports which have a better reputation."

"You believe everything Herbert says,

don't you?" murmured Amelia, looking at her companion with wondering eyes.

"I don't accept his opinions without considering them and demanding proofs, but when he tries to show me that some of my conventional notions are wrong I always try to be open-minded. That's how I came to throw away the corsets which were perverting nature and sowing the seeds of disease and misery for me."

"Oh, oh!" cried Amelia, putting her little gloved hands over her ears, "if you say a word about corsets I won't listen. As if Arthur didn't say enough without your taking it up. I know Morgan would like nothing better than to hurt Arthur."

Margie shrugged her shoulders and smiled pityingly, but she felt that neither time nor place was suitable for pushing the subject of corsets on her little friend, so she fell in with her wish and talked of something else.

"Of course Morgan would like to injure Arthur," she said, "but he will find that the Arthur he meets to-night is not the one he has so often insulted, secure in his superior strength. Just wait till they come out and you see Arthur stripped."

"Stripped! Oh, Margie! He won't really strip?"

She looked so alarmed that Margie, in spite of her laughter, hastened to reassure her that the stripping would be only from the waist up.

"It is quite customary," she added, "and for my part I would rather look at Arthur's magnificent body than see the fight. Why, you don't know how handsome he is when you see only his face."

"Have you really seen him—er—er—did you say stripped?"

"You little goose! Of course I've seen him when he and Herbert were taking their exercises at home, and it is from seeing such splendid specimens of manhood that I have learned to distinguish men from fashion plates, and I can tell you there is a difference you don't even dream of."

"Oh, Margie!" sighed Amelia, "how different you are from what you used to be before I went to Europe! Do you know that I somehow feel almost insignificant beside you?"

Margie said nothing to that, for she found nothing to say. She, too, felt the insignifi-

cance of the pretty little creature by her side, and she wondered why she should feel it in these days when she had not felt it during the previous years she had known Amelia.

"How crowded it is going to be," she said, to give the conversation a new turn. "I fancy it has leaked out that this is going to be something more than three rounds for points."

Amelia looked around at the streams of people filling every aisle, felt very comfortable in the consciousness of a Paris gown and hat, readjusted her waist as if she were trying to give herself a little more room, then sighed again.

"I do hope," she said doubtfully, "that Morgan won't hurt Arthur. You know he is terribly strong and masterful. Why there was a time, there at first, before Arthur was quite well, when that man fairly fascinated me. I don't know why it was, but I sometimes felt that I would have to do whatever he wished me to."

"Oh," replied Margie, "that was because he had such health and strength. I don't believe there is any attraction equal to that which a robust, strongly vitalized person

has for others, particularly of the opposite sex."

"But, Margie," murmured Amelia, opening her eyes in wonder, "I should think that would be dreadful if it were so. Why, in that case you would be attractive to lots of men besides Herbert; and I am sure neither of you would like that. You know you are what would be called robust and strongly vitalized. Why, papa said only yesterday that he thought you were the most magnificient woman he knew; that it did him good just to meet you and say good morning to you."

Margie laughed to hide the blush that rose to her cheeks, but it was a blush of pure pleasure, without a suspicion of resentment.

"I am glad your father feels so," she said, frankly. "Herbert says that all men and women ought to be glad to feel just that way toward each other; that it is a sign of health, and ought to be encouraged."

"Well, I can tell you I wouldn't encourage any other girl to be attracted by Arthur. He is mine, and I want him all to myself."

Margie was silent for a few moments, evidently debating something with herself. Then she said hesitatingly:

"Amelia, dear! If you really want Arthur all to yourself, why don't you make yourself strong and well like me?"

Amelia looked up with a faintly startled expression in her eyes, then tossed her pretty head proudly.

"I want Arthur to love me, not my body, and I am not afraid of his liking some other girl better because she happens to be stronger than I. Besides, I'm not sick. I'll soon be as well as ever."

She drew herself up and smoothed her waist down in the way so common in women who are striving for more room than their corsets allow their poor bodies.

Margie said no more, feeling that already she might have gone further than Arthur would like; for although he had shown himself concerned over Amelia's lack of perfect health, he had never discussed it with anybody.

Fortunately the entertainment was about to begin, and talking ceased; but if there was no more conversation between Margie and Amelia, both of them went on thinking of the subject they had just discussed.

It was an altogether new idea to Amelia

that physical health could have anything whatever to do with love, and she was disposed to scout it. She was rather inclined to think that most men liked a woman to be weak and dependent. True, Arthur had talked to her about injuring herself by wearing corsets, but she had put that aside as due to the influence of Herbert, who was associated in her mind as always nursing some new fad.

Besides, as she always said, she wasn't sick, but only a little ailing, due to the fatigue of traveling a little too much the last few months in Europe. She had begun to feel not quite herself when they were touring Italy. She knew she would be all right after she had been home a few weeks.

In the meanwhile, Arthur, quite nude, save for a towel wound about his loins, stood in the middle of one of the dressing rooms near the stage entrance, being rubbed down by Herbert, who had undertaken the duties of trainer for him.

Indeed Herbert was so proud of Arthur that not for anything would he have permitted any body else to perform that office for him. And if ever an athlete were a fit subject for pride it was Arthur.

Steadily he had been developing under the careful direction of Herbert and the gymnasium instructors, until now he was an almost perfect specimen of manhood.

He had not been trained into the Hercules type, with abnormal lumps of muscle standing out over his body, but was so evenly developed that a competent judge would have found it difficult to decide whether he was best fitted to be a runner, wrestler or boxer.

He stood nearly six feet in height, and as he moved easily in one direction and another to suit the wish of Herbert, the muscles could be seen to play under a skin as soft and smooth as a baby's.

His legs were strong, well rounded and beautifully proportioned; his arms were of almost classical length, hanging easily from his shoulders, and of a bigness that did not betray itself, so perfect was the proportion between girth and length. As for his chest, that important indicator of vitality, it was at once so broad and so deep as to make his flat, sinewy abdomen seem small.

If one who had seen Arthur in those wretched days when he was dying under the ministrations of his ignorant physician, had

come upon him now, as he stood there in a condition to betray the full grandeur of his physical perfection, he could not have believed that this was the same man.

Where had once been a dull eye, a drawn face, a sallow complexion, a dejected mien, a hollow-chested skeleton, was now the bright-eyed, alert, vitalized athlete, with a pink and white skin, an indomitable air of hope and purpose, an example of life at its best.

Herbert worked over him with an air of delight and pride, pleasant to see; and when he had given the last careful touch he threw a light robe over him and bade him lie down and wait for the call to come for him.

"You don't seem at all nervous," he said, as he looked into the smiling, alert face, "but we musn't take any chances. So rest quietly."

"I'm not nervous about the result," answered Arthur, "but I know I shall have a sort of nervousness come over me when I step out before the spectators and know that I am on exhibition."

"But that will pass as soon as you begin work?" queried Herbert.

"From the moment we begin I shall be

all right. Don't have any fear for me. If he wins it will be because he is the better man, not because I have not done my best."

"You are in the pink of condition, and you ought to win; but he's the best man you've ever stood up before; don't make any mistake about that, Arthur; and he is going to put up the fight of his life."

Arthur rose to his elbow, and his face set in grim, hard lines.

"I shall put up the fight of my life, Herbert. I don't forget the things he has said and done."

"Lie down!" said Herbert, in a tone of quiet authority. "I don't wish to put any disturbing thoughts into your head, but I do want to talk this over with you, old man. You musn't go into this fight with any other thought than winning, because you want the championship. Don't let so small a thing as revenge animate you, Arthur."

Arthur smiled as he fell back, and there was an evenness in his tone that assured Herbert he was speaking only the truth.

"It isn't revenge I want at all, and I shall not be fighting for it. What I want more than anything else is to prove to him that

I am without any doubt the better man. After that he shall not exist for me. As for the championship, I must confess that is incidental."

"I'm satisfied," said Herbert, in a tone of relief. "I ought to have known that you would not allow yourself to be controlled by a mean spirit, but I was so anxious that you should not enter the ropes in a frame of mind to ruin your mental poise that I spoke."

"I shall hit him no harder than I would a stranger with whom I might be contesting the championship; but," he added, with a grim smile, "I should hit a stranger the most soothing blow I could. I go in hoping to put my gentleman to sleep."

Herbert thrust his hands into his pockets and leaned back with a comfortable sigh. He no longer felt any discomfort. If Arthur were beaten it would be only because he had met a better man.

"I fancy," he said, "that Morgan will not be in the same even frame of mind that you are. In fact you will have to watch that his viciousness does not make him force the fighting, and perhaps put you to sleep when you at least expect it."

"I'll be cautious."

"And remember that he won the championship through sheer merit. He is the best man you have ever faced."

"I am sure he is."

Herbert now changed the subject and talked with Arthur about all sorts of interesting but not exciting matters, dwelling particularly on that topic of topics for him—his little daughter Gertrude.

And it was the best subject of conversation there could have been for Arthur, for he adored the baby, and the thought of her brought nothing but peace and contentment to him.

When he was called to go out he jumped up in surprise that the time had gone so quickly; and it would have been impossible for a man to be more "fit" than he for the trying ordeal through which he had to pass.

It was as he had predicted. When he threw off his robe and stood out on the stage he was nervous. He heard the applause that greeted him and Morgan, and as he looked over the sea of faces he seemed to realize that the whispering that was going on related

to the fact that this was to be something more than an ordinary sparring match.

But the slight blur that was before his eyes, the trembling he felt at his knees, the tremor he had at his heart, all passed away as if they had never existed when the signal to begin the contest was given.

He looked Morgan in the face and was unmoved by the ugly, sinister smile he saw there. He glanced over the body of his antagonist, and saw without fear the magnificent physique he must conquer.

As for the spectators, the more closely they studied the two men the more doubt of the result entered their minds. Morgan was a heavier, taller man, and seemed much more massive; but, on the other hand, the knowing ones noticed the length of Arthur's arms, the symmetry of his muscular development, the solidity and compactness of his figure, which showed that both agility and strength had been cultivated."

"That young fellow, Raymond, is as loose as ashes," said an old sporting man to his companion. "If he gets a fair blow at the big fellow he'll make him wish he had a pillow with him."

"Morgan's no slouch, all the same," was the answer. "We'll see three rounds, with the best man winning, which is more than you can say when you go to a professional contest."

And both men settled down to enjoy themselves, while Arthur and Morgan took stock of each other, an easy matter since both were nude from the waist up.

Time had been called, and they were testing each other's skill by a series of pretty feints, easy blows, swift recovers, changing guards. It took but a few seconds for both to know that there was not to be an instant of child's play.

Presently Morgan purposely invited a face blow from Arthur by opening his defence, and when Arthur took advantage of it dealt him a blow in the stomach that would have been very serious had not Arthur been prepared for just such a ruse.

Each drew back, feeling that he had had something like a measure of the other's skill; each felt an increased respect for the other. The only difference between their feelings was that Morgan's hatred of Arthur grew with the consciousness that he was a dangerous

antagonist, and coupled with it was rage at the possibility of defeat where he had expected victory.

But few blows were landed with any effect in the first round, which was no more than a very fine exhibition of sparring, in which, to the uninitiated spectators, the skill of the contestants was clearly exhibited.

Even Amelia lost her terror of Morgan when she saw how cleverly Arthur avoided the blows that were launched at him; and she came to the conclusion that so many others did that the bout would end much as it had begun.

But Arthur and Herbert, in their corner, with two other seconds, working over him, were thinking differently and saying so.

"He is very clever," said Arthur in a whisper, "but his condition is not as good as mine."

"No; but you must avoid a serious blow for he is a terrible hitter. He is making for your stomach, I am sure. Give him plenty of work in this round, and he ought to be yours in the third."

"I think I have his measure," answered Arthur, his eyes shining, "and I mean to keep him going now."

"Look out for his right," said one of the other seconds. "He'll play with his left and use his right for a surprise. I've known him to do that more than once."

Time was called again, and both men stepped out ready, and it was evident at once that both had come to the same determination; both meant to force the fighting.

And now it was that Arthur showed of what stuff he was made. A few swift but not telling blows were exchanged, and they warmed up to their work. They moved about the stage like two panthers, their fists shooting out, their heads moving with swift, automatic action, their lithe bodies never still, their feet moving with a marvellous precision and rapidity.

Suddenly Morgan rushed Arthur across the stage; Arthur side stepped and evaded him. There was a mix-up so swift and close that only the initiated could follow it, and Morgan staggered out of it impelled by a hard blow on his jaw.

Arthur had fooled him, had bested him in the quick exchange of savage blows. He saw that he had not correctly taken Arthur's measure. He was outwitted, outpointed.

Rage took possession of him, and he rushed back with a fury that pushed Arthur back and put him to his best to defend himself.

But he did defend himself from blows of fearful force, and crept around so deftly that the spectators broke into a storm of applause. Arthur smiled confidently. Morgan was maddened.

He rushed again. He was confident at least of his superior force and weight, and felt that Arthur could not resist him when he rained those terrible blows on him.

Arthur's eyes glowed. He never missed a move that Morgan made, though it seemed to those looking on that the swiftness of the storm of blows must be almost paralyzing.

He backed and backed; he dodged and guarded; he stood up and feinted; he shrank; he side stepped. The fury of Morgan seemed irresistible, and no one but the cleverest could see that there was any lack of skill.

Then Arthur, seeing his opportunity at last, changed into a tiger himself, and landed a short-arm blow just when it seemed as if the other were pushing him to his last defence.

Morgan staggered and Arthur followed up. He did the rushing now, raining blows with

dazzling rapidity. The house went wild. Hoarse cries went up from some of the most excited.

Suddenly a clean blow fell on Morgan's face, sending his head back with a jerk. He staggered, recovered, fought wildly, his labored breath coming and going audibly.

"Time!"

"Ah!" sighed the sporting man, dropping back in his seat and mopping his brow with his handkerchief. "In a minute more Morgan would have hunted grass. I wouldn't miss the next round for a thousand dollars."

"Be careful, be careful!" Herbert was saying to Arthur. "He lost his head a little that round, but he will be himself now. He will do you if he can, for he is in a wicked rage."

"Rage is a bad thing," murmured Arthur, saving his wind for something more important than speech.

"He can be mad and yet fight coolly," said one of the other seconds. "Look out for him."

"But you've got to force the fighting," said Herbert.

Arthur nodded his head.

"Time!"

The two men sprang out nothing the worse for what they had gone through. Morgan had himself under control now. He was in a murderous mood, but was like an icicle. He meant to win, and to win with such a blow as Arthur might forever wish had not been dealt him; and Morgan well knew where and how to land such a blow.

Arthur began as Morgan had hoped he would, by forcing the fighting. Morgan meant to bide his time now. Arthur had done so before and had profited by it. And yet Morgan had the appearance of making speedy work, too.

But presently he finds that there is a difference. Arthur rushes the fighting indeed, but he does it with all his wits about him and with a confident smile constantly on his handsome face.

Oh, if Morgan could but mar the good looks of his antagonist.

Arthur gets in a good left-hander, but instantly Morgan's right takes him on the jaw, and there is a moment when the place is full of electric sparks; but while Morgan is following up the blow with wicked exultation in his black eyes, Arthur recovers, defends

himself, and the two men break away for an instant.

Arthur is himself at once, and closes his right reaching Morgan on the tip of the chin. The latter's head goes back, and he is dazed; but the blow that should have put him to sleep was a trifle short, and he recovers.

He loses his self-control again, forgets his determination to wait, and rushes Arthur, who slips out of his way and takes toll of his ear as he passes.

Morgan, beside himself now, and panting hard, knows that he must end the battle soon. He rushes again, but Arthur changes his tactics at once and stands his ground. An exchange of frightful blows follows, as if both had thrown all notion of defence away.

But not so; Arthur has been only tiring the other. He gathers all his force and rushes at his antagonist. Morgan defends himself now with desperation. Only his wonderful skill saves him.

The crowd is beside itself with excitement. The battle may end at any moment. The names of both men rise over the tumult. Nothing like this has been seen in many a year.

Suddenly Arthur's right hand shoots out and lands with terrific force on Morgan's stomach. Those who have seen the blow know the sickness that leaps to the stricken man's face. Morgan wilted, staggered back. He could have done murder in that moment, for he knew that he had met his master.

But his courage was of the bull-dog sort. He had no thought of giving up.

The spectators were standing up all over the hall, some on chairs, crying out Arthur's name. Others were screaming "Sit down!" "Sit down!" Pandemonium reigned.

Morgan straightens up, and with the courage born of desperation rushes at Arthur, his jaws set, his teeth showing, his eyes glaring. He launches such a blow as would end the contest could it land; but Arthur, cool now as an iceberg, evades it, and lands a crushing right-hand blow on Morgan's chin.

Like an ox in the shambles, Morgan drops in a heap. His day is over. Champion no more. Beaten in love; beaten in war!

He struggles feebly, pitifully to recover consciousness, half rises and falls back again. He hears the seconds being counted over him as if some one were preaching his funeral sermon.

He makes a fearful effort, turns on hands and knees, staggers to his feet, and makes a tottering rush at Arthur, who only shrugs his shoulders and pushes him away as if he had been a child.

"Time!"

It was not a knock-out blow, but the defeat was none the less humiliating. There was no need of the decision of the referee. The spectators, crying out Arthur's name, gave the award unanimously.

"That's what I call sport," said the man who had picked Arthur as the winner from the first.

* * * * *

CHAPTER XI

BEFORE Arthur could get to his dressing room he was surrounded by his many friends and acquaintances, eager to congratulate him on his victory; for there had been unusual feeling over the match partly because Morgan was disliked, and partly because he had left the club in anger.

Arthur received their compliments with perfect modesty, and went to his dressing-room to be rubbed down and to dress, Herbert hurrying him as much as possible.

When they were alone Herbert for the first time betrayed what his anxiety and interest had been, almost hugging Arthur in his delight, patting him on the shoulder, praising him unstintedly and telling him over and over how well he had done.

"I think," he said in the course of the talk, "that if you had not beaten that fellow so thoroughly I should have gone to bed ill."

Arthur laughed, pleased to see his self-

contained brother-in-law betray so much feeling; then he grew serious and said:

"I am glad I whipped him, but I am still more glad that I went to meet him without meanness of spirit. I used to hate him, but it seems to me that since I have grown strong I have also grown bigger in nature."

"Ah," replied Arthur, "I believe that no man can be at his best morally and spiritually unless he is also his best physically. Unfortunately a man may be a physical giant and a moral dwarf; Morgan for example."

"Poor Morgan!" said Arthur.

"Don't waste your pity on him," cried Herbert quickly; "but rather look out for him. He will only hate you more for this, and will never cease trying to injure you. But to change the subject for a pleasanter one, I want to tell you that Bernardo, the great sculptor, asked me if I would not introduce him to you as soon as you were dressed."

"Bernardo! I'd like to meet him, but why should he want to see me?"

"May want to get up a match with you,"

laughed Herbert. "What do you say if I bring him in here? If you see him in the club parlors you know he will be only one of a hundred talking to you."

"Bring him in!" said Arthur, moved mainly by a wish to please, and little dreaming of the momentous results to follow his unimportant interview with the artist.

Mr. Bernardo proved to be a gentleman of charming personality and most engaging manners; his robust physique proving him a disciple of physical culture, while his Vandyke beard and his head of bushy brown hair, which had been permitted to grow in defiance of the conventional mode, suggested the artist.

"Pardon me for intruding on you at such a time, Mr. Raymond," he said as he entered the room, and without waiting for the formality of a presentation, "but as a member of the club I wished to thank you for winning it honors in such splendid fashion, while as an artist I wanted to tell you that you have the finest physique I have ever seen."

"Oh, thank you," murmured Arthur in some embarrassment at this frank compliment.

"No, don't thank me," said the artist with a smile; "thank yourself for that, for Mr. Courtney tells me you have worked hard to arrive at such a condition of physical perfection. Ah, sir! I have not had such delight in many a day as in studying you. Perhaps I annoy you with my frankness. Pardon me if I do; but as an artist I am selfish."

"I cannot see that you are selfish," answered Arthur, who was unfeignedly delighted at being so praised by one whose word carried authority. "And I would not be so hypocritical as to pretend that I was anything but pleased with your praise."

"Ah, but I am selfish, even in telling you the truth; and I can easily prove it."

"Please do so," responded Arthur, finishing his toilet and sitting down to listen to the vivacious artist.

"Well, I am just now at work on a group in marble, which I think will be my masterpiece, embodying as it does an idea on which I have wrought for some years. Perhaps, by the way, you are interested in sculpture?"

"Very much. I have plaster casts of many of the old Greek sculptors, which I have

studied in an effort to understand the ideal in physique."

"So much the better! so much the better. And no wonder you have accomplished so much with yourself since you have taken so much pains. Perhaps you would like to see my group in the clay. I have not begun on the marble yet."

"I should be delighted," answered Arthur, who was nevertheless puzzled to know why he should be invited to view it.

"Perhaps even—" Here the artist hesitated and looked at Arthur with a humorous expression lighting up his face. "You will now see that I am at once selfish and diplomatic. I tell you pleasant things about yourself to put you in a good humor, then I interest you in my poor efforts, and finally I put the grand question—unless you already guess it?"

"Indeed I do not," answered Arthur with a smile.

"Well, then, will you pose for me? I need, more than I can tell you, such a man as you. Come! you will not refuse me?"

"It is very flattering," answered Arthur hesitatingly, "but really I do not think it

will be possible. I could not spare the time; and, besides, I never have done such a thing, and—"

"I know; you think, perhaps, there is something objectionable in posing in the nude. Now I assure you—"

"No, no! do not think me so foolish," Arthur hastened to interrupt. "I have no such thought. I merely doubt my ability to pose properly. But that is of little consequence, anyhow; the real objection is that I have not the time. My father is ill, and all my time is occupied."

Bernardo looked more than a little disappointed, and cried out impulsively:

"But I cannot give you up. You have the most magnificent body I have ever seen in my life; and you must know that the human body has been my life study, so that I know what I am talking about. I have been so fortunate as to secure a female model as fine in her way as you in yours; and I simply will not take no from you. Why, consider! this is my master-work. Come! reconsider!"

"It is useless to reconsider. I really would like to oblige you, but I simply cannot."

"I am afraid the remuneration would not tempt you, or I would say that I am prepared to pay you twenty-five dollars an hour."

Arthur opened his eyes wide at the amount offered, but shook his head.

"Impossible," he said.

"If more would tempt you," said the artist, the keenest disappointment in his tone.

"No, if I could accept your offer I should consider myself overpaid with the sum you name. I did not suppose such prices were paid to models."

"It is exceptional; but you are exceptional. At least promise me you will come around to my studio and look at my group. I have some other things there, too, that may interest you."

"I shall be only too glad to visit your studio."

Mr. Bernardo rose reluctantly and put out his hand to Arthur, who shook it cordially.

"I cannot tell you how chagrined I am," said the artist sorrowfully. "When I saw you come out this evening I said to myself

that my lucky star was in the ascendant, and I did nothing but devour every curve of your magnificent body while you thumped that unfortunate Morgan. It seemed actually as if the very fates had been at work for me; for only a short time ago I came upon the young lady who poses for the female figure; and when I tell you that she is as superb as you in her physical development, you will understand how fortunate I was."

"Yes," interposed Herbert, speaking for the first time, "I suppose that it is really more difficult to find a perfect woman than a perfect man."

"Difficult!" cried the artist with great animation; "why it often seems to me as if the women of the civilized world gave the best of their thought, and bent all their energies to trying to defeat the intentions of nature as to their bodies. Shoes to distort their feet! long, heavy, impeding skirts to weaken their legs and make them knock-kneed! corsets to displace the viscera and lessen vitality! high collars to make their throats flabby! There! do not start me or I shall be ungallant."

"If they would only listen to reason!"

said Arthur with sudden depression. "I have a sister—Mr. Courtney's wife—who is a splendid specimen, but other women to whom I have spoken on the subject—" He suddenly checked himself, looked suspiciously at Herbert and shrugged his shoulders as if dismissing the subject.

The talk went on on the same subject, but Arthur took no further part in it then, or later when he and Herbert were alone together and the latter purpose brought up the subject again.

Instead of doing so, he turned the conversation on the artist, praising him warmly and declaring that he meant some day to visit him. Herbert, upon this, made no further effort to discuss the subject with Arthur, but that evening told Margie of the matter, adding:

"I think something is wrong between Arthur and Amelia, and that corsets have something to do with it."

"I am sure of it," Margie answered, and, in her turn, repeated to Herbert the conversation between her and Amelia in the auditorium.

"What shall you do about it?" he asked.

"I shall offer my services to Arthur. That is as far as I have any right to go."

"I am glad to hear you say so. I have noticed for some time that Amelia was not well; and it was easy to see that she was only suffering the natural consequences of her tight lacing. Poor child!"

The next day after dinner, and before Arthur had gone out to see Amelia, according to his custom, Margie found an opportunity to be alone with him; and with the frankness which was characteristic of her she broached the subject at once.

"I had a talk with Amelia last night about corsets, Arthur," she said.

His face lightened up instantly, and he looked at her eagerly.

"Yes, Margie?"

"Yes, but I didn't say much, because she stopped me at once, declaring she would not listen."

Arthur sighed, and the troubled look that had been in his eyes at first returned again.

"She isn't well, Margie, and I know it is because of her corsets. She says she doesn't lace, that her corsets are loose, and that she isn't really sick. And now she refuses to

hear any more on the subject. I don't know what to do. She could be well and strong, and she won't be."

Margie put her hand lovingly on her brother's.

"Perhaps after you are married you can influence her more," she said.

"She won't talk about marriage either until she is quite well; and I know she will never be well until she dresses and lives rationally. I have told her how strong and well you are; but, upon my word, I believe she thinks such robustness as yours is unladylike. I really do."

"Couldn't you insist upon having a full talk with her? Perhaps she doesn't realize the importance of health to a wife and mother."

"Insist? Why Margie, she hadn't been home a week before I saw that she was no longer her old self, but was weak and nervous. I think she must have taken to tighter lacing while she was abroad. I spoke about it then, but she was so shocked at my speaking of such a subject at all that I stopped; but I took it up again and again until she was no longer shocked, anyhow, but became irritated

instead, and declared she would not see me if I insisted on talking on that subject. And, in fact, the next time I went there—about two weeks ago now—she sent me down a note saying I must promise to never speak of corsets again, or she wouldn't come down."

Margie raised her eyebrows. She knew something of the obstinacy of the pretty little creature and realized the dilemma Arthur was in.

"What if I speak to her, Arthur? She couldn't treat me in that way, you know. And really she has no right to be either wife or mother in her state of health. She ought to be told so."

"I don't know that it will do any good, Margie," he answered despondently, "but I wish you would. You know if I were to suggest such a thing as the possibility of her being a mother some time she would think I had overstepped the bounds of propriety. I don't know what she thinks men and women marry for if it is not for offspring."

The last words were spoken petulantly, and Margie studied her brother for some time in silence, he staring out of the window, his thoughts apparently far away.

"Of course," she said at last in a very gentle tone, "you love her just the same as ever?"

"Certainly I do. Why do you ask such a question?"

It was seldom indeed that Arthur lost his temper, and that he did so now, indicated how much he was disturbed by Amelia's attitude toward the question of her health.

"And you would make her your wife whether she were well or ill?" Margie went on, unmoved by his irritation.

Arthur jumped up from his chair and turned his back to his sister while, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, he looked out of the window. Margie waited; and after some time he turned toward her, saying in a troubled tone:

"Margie! Margie! I torture myself with that question day and night. Have I the right to let her be the mother of my children? I do love her, Margie; I do. And if she would only be well and strong as she may if she will, I know we could be happy together, But oh, Margie! I shame to say it, she does not draw me and thrill me as she once did."

"How can she, Arthur dear, if she lack vitality?"

"But is love a matter of physical health? Ought I not love her better and better, and be more tender with her because she is not strong?"

"Love is not a sentiment to be coerced, Arthur. You love her or you do not. If you do not you have no right to marry her."

"Not even if I have won her love? Would it not be a dastardly thing to tell her that because she is not as well and strong as she was I find I do not love her? Would you respect me if I were to do such a thing?"

"I would not respect you if you deceived her, Arthur."

"But I do love her."

Margie looked at him doubtfully. She did not believe he loved as a man should love the woman he would bind to his side for life.

"Suppose," she said, "Amelia should utterly refuse to take the steps which will result in her cure; would she be fit to be a mother?"

"No."

"Has she a right to bring children into

the world unless she can endow them with good health?"

"No."

"Have you a right to father such children even if she were willing to be their mother?"

"I would be the worst kind of a criminal."

"Then if you marry Amelia and she is unfit to be a mother, your sense of right would demand that there should be no children."

"But that is unthinkable. To marry without the intention of having offspring would be a living horror."

"Then if you loved her a hundred times more than you do, would you dare to make her your wife unless she were well enough to be a mother?"

"No, no, Margie! But what shall I do? Do not think I have not gone over this ground in my own thoughts, though scorning myself for doing it. But although I come always to the same conclusion, yet I remember that I have won her love, and that she loves me of all men in the world, that her heart would break if she were to know that I feel as I do. And it is not as if I did not love her. I do, and would do anything for her happiness."

"Do you love her as a man should his wife, Arthur? Do you thrill at her touch? Does your blood begin to move faster at the sight of her, at the sound of her voice?"

"It used to be so," he answered in a low tone; "it is so no more. I think—and I shame to think—that it would be so again if she were now as she was, strong, active and well. And yet I love her, Margie."

"Would you like my advice, Arthur?"

"You do not need to ask. No one can advise me as well. You are a woman and should see her side; you are my sister and should feel for me."

"I do feel for you and for her, too, Arthur. I said I would speak to her, but I think now that you would best do so yourself. Go to her and demand that she listen to you. You are engaged to marry, and have a better right to speak of parenthood than a man and woman about to marry?"

"And if she refuse to listen?"

"She will not if you are firm."

"And if she refuse to take my advice?"

"Ah, Arthur! you must ask that question not only of your own heart, but of your own knowledge, your own wisdom. It is not

for me to tell you what to do in such a case."

"You are right, Margie. I have been a coward long enough. I will go to her and tell her how I feel. And I will go at once."

He kissed his sister and left the room without another word; and Margie knew by his pale, set face that a crisis had been reached in two young lives.

"Poor little Amelia!" she murmured.

CHAPTER XII

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the difficulties of Arthur's position in relation to Amelia. He knew what a high spirit and what a strong will were hidden by the sweetness and gentleness of her nature; and he dreaded the consequences of insisting on talking with her on the subject of corsets.

He knew how her real nature was belied by her seeming weakness and frivolity; but for that very reason he was the more sure that he would find her immovable unless he could contrive to hit upon the exact appeal that would compel her sympathy with his view.

The trouble was that poor little Amelia had been instructed in almost everything but herself. Of herself she knew nothing, and had a horror of knowing anything. Nor could she reconcile it with either propriety or nice feeling that Arthur should wish to discuss "forbidden" or *risque* subjects.

Moreover, she felt very strongly that he was outside of his own province in trying to govern the sort of clothing she should wear.

If his sister chose to go without corsets to please her husband, that was her affair; but neither Arthur nor any other man should decide for her.

She said this, even to herself, in her own pretty, piquant way, as if she were only half in earnest; but that was only because she had no idea that Arthur would push the matter any further than he had already done.

She had already consulted with others on the subject, and felt herself at once fortified and justified in her attitude. One of the first persons she had gone to was her father.

Of course, it was a very delicate subject for an American girl to talk to her father about, but she needed some information which only he could give her. She went to him as he sat in the library, one evening, just before the gas was lighted. And she would not let him light it because it would be so much easier to talk about such a thing in a dim light.

"No," she had said in her pretty peremptory way, "I don't want the light. I am going to sit down here and talk to you."

"Sit on my lap then," he said, tenderly; for she was the object on which he lavished all his love.

"No, not until I have asked my questions."

"I begin to be frightened. It isn't another new hat?"

"Oh, no; I wouldn't talk to you about hats. I might talk to you about the bills, but not the hats. Men don't know anything about hats. Well, I don't think they do; but maybe they do. Anyhow, maybe they think they do. Why do men think they know so much more than women, papa?"

"Is that one of the questions?"

"Now, don't be a foolish little papa! No, that is not one of the questions; that was only a little bit of sarcasm. What do you know about corsets?"

Little Mr. Winsted was not in the habit of thinking about corsets, let alone talking about them; for he was an extremely proper person.

"Er—er—is that one of the questions, Amelia.

"Yes, it is."

"Why, my dear," he answered, after a pause, "I must say I know nothing about them."

"But mamma wore them?"

"Why, yes, I believe so."

"Now, you know she did, don't you? She always wore them, didn't she?"

"I have no doubt she did, my dear. Ladies always wear them, I think. I never gave the matter much thought, naturally, but I am convinced that your mother did wear them. She had a beautiful figure; and I suppose she couldn't have had that unless she wore corsets; could she?"

"But you are asking me questions, and I didn't come here for that. Do you mean to say you never talked with mamma about corsets?"

"I don't remember doing so; and I am quite sure that I did not. I don't know why I should have chosen such a peculiar subject for conversation with her; and I don't believe I ever did."

"Oh! you think it a peculiar subject for conversation between a lady and gentleman, do you?"

"Why, really, Amelia! don't you?"

"There, you are asking questions again! Don't do it again! I'm to do all the questioning. Do you think corsets a peculiar subject for conversation between a lady and a gentleman?"

"Why, yes. I don't see how a man can know anything about the subject, unless"—with sudden illumination—"he is in that business. But why do you ask?"

"Asking questions again! No, a man wouldn't be likely to know much about corsets. That's true. And it would be very foolish of him to pretend to know. I suppose mamma never talked to you about them because she took it for granted that you wouldn't know. And you never broached the subject because—well, because it was none of your business. Yes, I see! Now, I'll sit on your lap for five minutes."

"But why have you been asking me such strange questions, Amelia? It seems to me that if you want to know anything about wearing apparel you should go to a dressmaker."

"What a dear, clever old papa you are! Yes, certainly. There! I'll kiss you for that smart speech."

It was now quite clear in Amelia's mind that she had been right in feeling that Arthur had transcended the proprieties in talking with her about her corsets; but she meant to be fortified on all sides; so she went to see Mrs.

Raymond one day when she knew Margie wasn't home.

Maude was with her mother, but Amelia did not mind that, knowing that Maude had no sympathy with the novel ideas Herbert Courtney had brought into the house. Amelia opened her business at once.

"You know, Mrs. Raymond," she said, when the affectionate greetings were over, "I have no mother, and have to come to you with some of my little troubles."

"You could come to no one more eager to help you, dear," was the earnest answer; for Arthur's mother had always loved her little neighbor, and since her engagement to Arthur had taken her into her heart quite as one of her own children. "What is the matter now?"

"Oh, it's the corset question. Arthur wants me to give up corsets."

"I sometimes think Arthur is worse than Herbert," interjected Maude. "He is forever telling me that my only salvation is to stop wearing them."

"I do wish," sighed Mrs. Raymond, "he wouldn't be so opinionated. I suppose I'm old-fashioned, but I must say I think there are some things that we women would better

regulate ourselves. I hope you told him, dear, that you thought it was a subject you naturally knew more about than he could."

"Well, I told him I just wouldn't discuss the subject with him."

"Quite right," said Maude.

"But," added Amelia, earnestly, "I don't want to do wrong and I do love Arthur so much that I want to be sure I'm right. You know I'm not well, Mrs. Raymond, and Arthur declares that I would be if I stopped wearing corsets."

"Oh, he's crazy on the subject of physical culture," snapped Maude, whose own health was so poor that she was generally irritable. "I think he'd try to mend furniture by physical culture if he had his way."

"Arthur means well, Maude," said Mrs. Raymond, gently, "but of course it is impossible that he should know as much as he thinks. He doesn't know as we do that women are never strong."

"He points to Margie," said Amelia, "and says she owes her wonderful health and strength to giving up corset wearing. And, of course, Margie is well; isn't she?"

"Of course she's well," cried Maude, "but

she always was. Arthur might just as well tell us to take our shoes off. As for Margie, she would have been well anyhow; and she may go without corsets or without shoes if she wants to; but I won't make a fright of myself."

"I must say," sighed Mrs. Raymond, "that I don't see either sense or modesty in giving up corsets. Why, I would fall to pieces if I took mine off. And as for looks, you need only ask any dressmaker to fit you without corsets if you want to hear her opinion."

"Oh," said Amelia at once, "you should have heard Madame Mathilde when I spoke to her about giving up corsets. Of course, I only did it to hear what she would say. Well, she did give the dress-reformers fits. And really you know they are a funny lot."

"I spoke to Dr. Brayton about the matter," Mrs. Raymond said, "and he told me it was only a fad that would soon be out of fashion. He said it was very well known that consumption was less common among women than men, and that is was undoubtedly the corset that brought about such a condition."

"Really?"

"Yes, and he laughed heartily when I told him that Herbert and Arthur laid Margie's good health to her having given up her corsets. No, Amelia, you may depend upon it that they don't know what they are talking about. I only hope poor Margie won't have cause to regret what she has done."

"Her shape is spoiled already," said Maude. "She'll never get her waist back. She admits, herself, that it is four inches larger than it was. And her hips do not seem nearly so finely proportioned as they were formerly. Have you noticed that, Amelia?"

"They certainly are not as prominent."

"For my part," went on Maude, "I'd like to be well and strong, but if I were sure I could be so by giving up my corsets, I can tell you I'd stop and think a long time before I'd do it."

"I'd like to be well, too," said Amelia; "and sometimes I think that if I were sure I'd be better without corsets I might give them up. But I've got myself to a good shape now—you'd be surprised how small my waist is—and unless I am sure—You don't think there is anything in it, Mrs. Raymond?"

"There's nonsense in it, my dear, and nothing else. If corsets were such evil things I guess the fact would have been discovered before Arthur came along to find it out."

They all laughed gaily at this, and felt that Mrs. Raymond had settled the question very effectually.

"And you wouldn't give in to Arthur about it if you were in my place?" Amelia asked.

"Certainly not, my dear. I think we women know our own business best. Be firm and he'll soon give up this notion. He's so young, dear, that it isn't strange he thinks he knows more than he really does."

Thoroughly fortified now, Amelia was prepared to take a firm stand against Arthur in case he should insist upon again discussing the subject of corsets.

That he would approach the subject in a mood so serious as his was she did not dream. There certainly did not seem to her to be the material for a tragedy in such a subject as a part of her wearing apparel.

She could see that he was troubled, however, when he met her on the evening of his talk with Margie, and as she was a very

tender-hearted little creature, she nestled very close to him and said softly:

"Has something gone wrong with you, Arthur, dear? You look tired and anxious, as if something were worrying you."

"There is nothing wrong with me," he answered, "but I am unhappy about you. I can't bear to see you growing paler and weaker all the while."

"Oh," she said brightly, "don't worry about me; I'm taking a new tonic now that will bring me about; the doctor is sure it will."

"Do you remember how he kept drugging me until I refused to take any more of his vile stuff?"

"This is different, Arthur, dear. But never mind about that! I have a quarrel with you, sir. Do you know that you never told me a word of the fine things that sculptor said to you?"

"I'll tell you all about that later, if you care to hear it, but I must talk to you about yourself, dear. Your health is the most precious possession you have, and I want you to—"

"All right," she said in a tone of resigna-

tion, "go on if you will, but if you knew how tired I am of that subject you would never broach it again."

"But you must want to get well, Amelia?"

"And papa is paying the doctor to make me so. You dear old Arthur! don't you suppose I am as much concerned as anybody else?"

"The doctor will never make you well, Amelia; drugs will never make you well. You are violating the laws of health, and as long as you do, you will suffer. I know you don't want me to talk about—"

"Arthur!" she cried, starting to her feet, "you know I will not listen to you if you talk about that forbidden topic."

"Amelia, dear," he answered, pleadingly, "I must talk to you about it. I have thought and thought, and I see no other way. You are the most precious object in my life. I love you with all my heart and soul, and I shall not be true to either you or myself if I do not speak the truth as I see it."

"You have no right to say anything I forbid you to," she cried with spirit.

"Not if I beg you in the name of our love to listen?" he pleaded.

"There are some things I must judge the propriety and wisdom of," she answered. "Besides, I know all you can say already; and I don't care to listen. I won't listen."

"But, Amelia," he said in a low, pained tone, "have you the right to dispose of my happiness as well as your own in such an arbitrary way? Your health is not a matter of to-day, merely, but of all our married life."

"Your happiness!" she repeated, looking at him wonderingly. "How am I disposing of your happiness? Is it such a delight to you to talk about—my corsets?"

"Oh, Amelia! you know it is unfair of you to say that."

"And isn't it unfair of you to insist on talking on a subiect that is utterly distasteful to me? Surely, what I wear concerns no one but myself."

"Amelia, dear, isn't a husband properly concerned in his wife's health?"

"You are not my husband, Arthur."

"I am engaged to you; we are to be husband and wife."

"Not until I am well, Arthur; so you see you are premature."

"And if I am sure that by going the way

you are going you will not be well, have I not the right to warn you? Surely, our engagement does not mean that we are to wait forever for each other?"

"If you are impatient," she cried proudly, "the engagement may be broken off when you please."

"Oh, Amelia!"

"Well, I don't mean to say unkind things, Arthur, but you make me when you argue with me in that way. I can't help being sick."

"Yes, dear, you can. At least you might try my way."

"No, I will not; and you have no right to ask me to."

"I have a right, Amelia, and I can prove it to you if you will let me."

"I won't hear a word about corsets."

"I will try to avoid that particular subject, but I may have to say some things that will shock you. Please don't mind if I do. You know that I love you, and that my respect for you is such that I would rather bite my tongue off than permit it to utter, unnecessarily, words you may object to."

"Oh, Arthur! I wish you had never turned

reformer. I wish you would let me alone. I wish you would be like other men. Nobody else finds fault with me. Other folks think I have a good figure."

"I am so sorry," he answered deprecatingly, his eyes resting sorrowfully on the pouting face. "I would not be even what I am if I had not stepped out of the beaten track. I can't let you alone, because I love you and want you to be well and strong, so that you may enjoy life as I do. Besides, dear, has it ever occurred to you that it is your duty to be well and strong?"

"I am sure no one wants to be more than I do, but I don't see how it is my duty."

"Surely, you have no right to marry unless you are well."

"I don't mean to do so. You know I have always said we must wait. But I don't see what *right* has to do with it."

"No woman has a right to be a wife and a mother who cannot give her children good health," he said.

The color flooded her face and she caught her breath. It was shocking to her to have Arthur say such a thing so plainly. He went hurriedly on:

"Don't be shocked at my words, Amelia, for it really pains me to say them; but there is no other way of getting at what I must say to you. We expect to have children, do we not?"

She did not answer him, but sank into a chair a little distance from him, and sat there with her head bent. Despairing of an answer from her, and feeling that it was his duty to make himself clearly understood, he went on again:

"I could prove to you, if you would let me," he said in a gentle, pleading voice, "that it is impossible for any woman dressing as you do to be the mother of strong children. Even if you were not sick it would be your duty to live right for the sake of your children. You do agree with me, I am sure."

She would not answer, but sat like a statue. It was as if she had realized his seriousness and had made up her mind to hear him out, no matter what he said.

"Don't you see, then, dear, that I have a right to talk to you about how you dress if anything in your dress will prevent our making a happy home, and no home can be happy without children. I know it is not customary

to talk of such things; I know it is the habit to pretend that children have nothing to do with the reasons why people marry; but nothing is so sure as that children are the result of a permanently happy marriage, and it is equally sure that it is criminal to marry without health."

He was silent so long that Amelia rose to her feet and faced him, her cheeks pale now.

"Have you finished, Arthur?" she asked.

"I want to hear your views, Amelia," he answered; "please don't be angry; sit here by my side, won't you, dear? Why can't we talk of these things in love and tenderness," he said, his tones agitated as he noted her white, drawn features.

"Love and tenderness!" she said, a touch of scorn in her tone. "It does not seem to me as if love and tenderness had much to do with the matter. From the way you have been talking, I should think marriage was a very commonplace, mechanical affair."

"Oh, no, Amelia, don't say that!"

"One must be well and strong," she said, with curling lip. "The notion that love is the reason for marrying is out of date and old-fashioned. Oh, no! people marry now with a

doctor's certificate of health in order that their children may be well."

"You are angry, Amelia," he said, gazing at her sadly and reproachfully.

"Do you know, I wonder, the plain meaning of what you have said to me?"

"I do not know what interpretation you put upon my words; but I do know that I love you."

"I did not suppose that love demanded a certificate of good health. I had always supposed that when the object of one's love was sick, one grew more tender and loving."

"You are twisting my words, Amelia."

"Did you not say that a woman must be in good health to be a wife?"

"I said she should be and I cannot retract my words, because you are angry with me, Amelia."

"Then you meant that if I would not get well you would not make me your wife?"

"I did not mean that, dear. I would gladly make you my wife to-morrow if you would consent, and would agree to try reasonable methods of recovering your health; but I would not dare take up with you the duties of parentage if you were not well and strong."

"Words! They mean the same thing. I must be well, and I must be well in your way; and you reduce the sweet, holy union of two souls to the level of the animals."

"How can you say that, Amelia?"

"Well, have you not as good as said that if I will not adopt your ideas you will not marry me?"

"That is a very harsh way of putting it, Amelia."

"Come, then! Will you marry me if I refuse to take your view of the matter?"

"Do not ask me such a question as that!"

"Well, then, I do refuse. I shall wear corsets now, and as long as I please. I shall believe that the doctor knows more than you, and will follow his advice; and now you may have your freedom. Here is the ring you gave me!"

"Amelia! Amelia! You will not do this!"

"I have done it, and I abide by what I have done. I will not be controlled by you in matters that do not concern you. You are mad with theories."

"Do you no longer love me?" he asked sadly.

"I love you far better than you love me,

but I will not retract what I have done. Our engagement is over. Here is your ring!"

She placed her engagement ring on a table near her and swept out of the room.

* * * * *

CHAPTER XIII

ARTHUR went away from the Winsted house with hopeless despair written in every line of his mobile features, for he loved the little creature who had been closer to his heart than any other from their childhood.

It was one thing to theorize on marriage and its duties, but quite another thing to be torn away and sent adrift from the object of one's dearest love.

Arthur could remember no such despair like that which filled him as he slowly left the house and walked away into the silence, the gloom and the loneliness of the night.

It would have been easier, as it would have been pleasanter, to have remained in the parlor waiting for Amelia to return, and hear his plea for forgiveness.

But such a plea must have been accompanied by a retraction of what he had said; perhaps, even, by an admission that he had been wrong in saying it; and, alas! sorrowful as he was, he could not believe that he had been wrong.

He could wish that he had been more tactful, that he had somehow contrived to convey his idea of the truth to her without offense; but as he went over the ground again and again, he still came back to the point that it was the most sacred duty of a would-be parent to be in good health.

"I know," he groaned aloud, "how brutal it must have seemed to poor little Amelia, when she understood that I made health a paramount condition of marriage. Oh, why did not someone teach her long ago that a marriage cannot be happy without children, and even though the begetting of children is an animal function, it is none the less sacred? Why are we taught to belittle that which is animal? As if that which is animal may not be charged with the noblest and most purifying sentiments!"

It did not lessen his pain to know that Amelia still loved him so well that she was probably crying her heart out, and moaning for him to come back and be to her what he had been that first blessed week of her return from Europe, when there was no question between them but of love and adoration.

It did not help him in the least to know

that her arms would be wide open to him would he but return with a recantation on his lips. He knew he had only to go back and say: "I was wrong."

And his love for her, yes, and his pity for her in her illness, kept continually urging him to go back with those few easy words on his lips. He knew, too, that his mother and his sister Maude would assail him with reproaches and pleadings to be like other young men and put his strange notions aside.

Recant! Recant! Conform! Conform! So the many have cried out to the few in all the ages of the world. Be different at your peril! Be like us if you would be happy!

But there are some who cannot conform, who are unable to recant; those who, having had the courage to think, have the still greater courage to endure for Truth's sake.

A man's spirit may be more bruised by such a conflict as Arthur went through with himself that night than by all the trials that may be put upon him by others; and so it was that he crept into the house long after midnight, worn out.

If he had met his sister Margie immediately after leaving Amelia, he would have told her

all that had taken place, and that would have been good for him, for a loving, sympathetic woman can give a man such help as he can obtain nowhere else.

When morning came, however, and the night before seemed to him a long, long way off, with its events already shadows in the dim past, it seemed to him that there was nothing to talk about.

Margie, woman-like, had heard him come in, and had looked at her little bedside clock. "Poor Arthur!" she had murmured, "he has had a hard time."

In the morning, eager to help him, she had put herself in his way, had thrown a sisterly arm about him, and had said:

"What luck, Arthur, dear?"

"The engagement has been broken."

"Ah! Arthur, I'm so sorry," she said, tenderly.

"Yes; by her. I was not tactful; she was angry. This is the end."

"She will think it over, and all will be right again, Arthur."

"I think not. I can't talk about it, Margie. Help me when mother and Maude find out. They can never understand."

That was all he meant to tell any of the family; but Amelia said more. She told Mrs. Raymond and Maude practically everything, believing, perhaps, that somehow, through them, Arthur could be brought to her again, shorn of his strange notions.

And Mrs. Raymond and Maude, filled with indignation and horror, assailed Arthur at once, as he had foreseen they would; and he discovered that a man need be strong indeed to resist the importunities of those with whom he is in daily and hourly contact.

Sorrowful looks, sighs and words were his lot day after day. His mother and sister made Amelia's cause their own, and fought it with a pertinacity that had for its basis a sense of injury to the whole sex; and in spite of her good will Margie was powerless to give him much help.

It would be idle to repeat all that was said to poor Arthur, for there was necessarily much repetition; but one conversation may be given as a sample of many. It was the first after the breaking of the engagement became known.

"Oh! Arthur," moaned Mrs. Raymond,

"why have you broken your engagement with Amelia?"

"It was not I, mother. She broke it."

"But why, Arthur?"

"I don't want to talk about it, mother. We had a difference of opinion on the subject of the importance of health to a mother."

"Health!" cried Maude, fretfully, as was natural with a girl suffering from the follies of unhygienic clothing; "one would suppose that a red skin and the ability to walk ten miles were of every importance, and love of none. I don't want to marry any man who looks me over like a prize cow before asking me to be his wife."

"You have no more right to be a wife in your condition than Amelia has," answered Arthur, a little sharply.

"If all men held such dreadful notions, Arthur," said his mother, severely, "there would be no marriages. Do you mean to say that love is of no consequence in marriage? Are you sure that you are not confounding the baser emotion of passion with the pure and holy one of love?"

"I don't mean to, mother. But you,

mother, don't you think parents owe it to their children to give them good health if they can?"

"Ah, Arthur, we never discussed such subjects in my day. Why, if your father had ventured to speak to me about such matters before we were married I—I—why, I wouldn't have married him."

"Then you and Amelia are of the same mind," answered Arthur, wearily, "for she refuses to be my wife on substantially the same ground."

"And quite right," said Maude. "But I don't see how you can help being ashamed of yourself when you think that you have deserted her because she is not well—the very time when she needs your loving help the most."

"Arthur, dear," said his mother, "why don't you give up these singular notions of yours and do as your father did—let well enough alone? Go to Amelia and tell her you love her just as well as ever, and say you regret the unkind words you have spoken to her. Surely, you don't want to make her unhappy?"

"I don't want a child of mine to have the

right to tell me that it owes its ill health to me," Arthur answered.

"A well-taught child will never address such a reproach to its parent."

"But it would have the right," he replied; "and a conscientious parent cannot rest content with a silence which his knowledge of the truth makes an accusing one."

"Don't you believe in love at all?" Maude demanded. "Is marriage all on a physical basis with you?"

"All marriages are founded on a physical basis, no matter how much spiritual love may be added," he answered curtly. "It must be, no matter what sentimentalists may say."

"My boy, you do not mean what you say," cried his mother. "Why, you would lower us to the level of the brutes. Do you not love Amelia?"

"Better than anyone else in the world."

"Then why not smother your foolish pride, and go to her, asking her to forgive you for words that must seem hard and cruel to her?"

"Oh! mother, why will you not understand me? It is no matter of pride, but of plainest duty. Amelia refuses to understand me just as you do. Like Maude, she would rather be

fashionable than well. She clings to her corsets as if they were holy things, on which her immortal soul depended, when, if she would but think for a moment, she would see that there must be more of the spirit of evil than of good in a garment that tortures, maims and distorts the body, and renders her unfit for motherhood. And she is unfit for motherhood; she admits it herself by refusing to marry me until she is well."

But Arthur might as well have argued the matter with one of his plaster casts for all the impression he made on either his sister or mother. They passed over any telling point as if it had not been made, and repeated their reproaches with ever fresh zest.

If he had but known it, even little Amelia tired of their assertions continually repeated. It seemed as if they made her see the futility of her own feeble contest against the truth.

Then she began to listen to Margie with more attention; for Arthur's sister, seeing his distress, and wishing to help him most effectually, had ventured to broach the subject to Amelia.

How much impression she made she did not know; but one day, less than a month

subsequent to the interview between the lovers, she said to Herbert when they were alone together in their room:

"I am making some headway with Amelia; I know I am. She is asking questions."

* * * * *

CHAPTER XIV

ARTHUR, meanwhile, was absorbing himself in business, hoping to find in its absorption a relief from the ever-present distress of his trouble with Amelia.

Mr. Raymond was especially pleased to have Arthur devote himself to the business, his own health being in such a state that he felt he had no secure hold on life, although he kept his own counsel in regard to that.

The real estate business which Mr. Raymond had built up during many years of close and conscientious work was now in the most prosperous condition that it had ever been, so that the sick man had the comforting assurance that now that Arthur thoroughly understood it he need have none of that horror of death hanging over him which must haunt the man who has a family depending on him and no means of supporting them.

So Arthur, glad to relieve his father, and rejoiced to put all his energies into something so worthy, took over more and more of the

work, until it seemed as if his powers must be inadequate to the labor he had to perform.

But even work was not sufficient to fill all of his time, or take all of his thoughts. The gymnasium, indeed, demanded a small portion of his spare time, but not as much now as formerly, when he was building up the magnificent body which he was now only concerned to maintain in its perfect condition.

It was thinking of this that one day recalled to his mind the flattering words of the artist Bernardo. He had practically forgotten him until that moment, his trouble having so occupied his thoughts; but when the sculptor did enter his mind, it was to rouse the wish to see him.

Aside from Arthur's pleasing recollections of the man, there was the incentive of the probability that there would be some interesting art works in his studio; and Arthur was passionately fond of the beautiful.

That very afternoon, happening to be near the studio, he bent his steps toward it. It stood on a side street, just off Fifth avenue; and Arthur saw at once that one of New York's fine old mansions had been used. He

discovered later that the back yard and stable had been made into one huge studio, the former being covered with glass.

His hand was on the door-bell to ring it, when the door was opened, and he stood face to face with a young woman who was about to come out of the house.

The sudden and unexpected encounter confused both of them; they murmured a few words of explanation and apology; smiled because they had done so, and she was gone.

An extraordinary sensation thrilled Arthur. His blood throbbed more swiftly. What soulful, honest, child-like eyes those were that had looked into his! What lips that had parted over the white, regular teeth when the reluctant, shy smile had crept over her face! What a glow of health beneath the snowy skin!

He looked after her, oblivious of the servant who stood in the doorway. What a superb carriage! How gracefully, but with how little effort she moved!

"Did you want to see anyone, sir?" the negro servant said in a loud voice, a faint grin showing on his lips.

"Oh, I didn't know—I didn't see you. Mr. Bernardo! Is this his studio?"

"Yes, sir. Walk in, sir."

He went into the front parlor, now used as a reception room, evidently, and there he was presently joined by the sculptor, who showed great pleasure in meeting him again.

"Forgive me," said the artist, "for not shaking hands with you, but as you see, I am covered with clay." He pointed to his apron and hands, which were stained with clay. "The moment I heard who you were I came in without stopping to clean up; but my work is over for the day, so waive ceremony and come back into the studio with me and look around while I wash off the dirt."

The studio was a vast apartment, at one end of which, under the full light of the glass roof, stood what seemed a massive group, covered with cloth, indicating to Arthur that it was the one Mr. Bernardo was at the time at work on.

"My model has not been gone five minutes," the latter said, as he threw off his apron. "If you had come a little sooner you might have met her; and well worth seeing she is, too."

Arthur felt himself flush, and was annoyed to think that he should do so.

"Perhaps I did see her," he said, trying hard to make his tone one of indifference, and wondering all the while why the mere thought of the young woman he had met should start his blood throbbing again. "I met a young lady at the door just as I was coming in."

"Make you think of Aurora or Hebe, or some other favorite goddess?" asked the sculptor.

"She was certainly a splendid specimen of womanhood," Arthur answered, studying a statue with a critical air without seeing it at all.

"That must have been she. I'll show you my study of her in a few minutes. A very fine young woman!"

He spoke in a tone of praise, but with a calmness Arthur found himself half resenting.

"Perhaps she won't like me to see the study," he said, trying to be fair to the young lady, but hoping the sculptor would find an argument with which to push aside his scruples.

"I wouldn't show it to everybody. No, she won't mind in this case. I've spoken to her about you and my hopes, you know"—

he laughed genially—"and she said I might let you see the group, and see her, too, if I thought best. Of course, I don't mean posing; you understand that, of course. That's a fine thing you're looking at now. It was done by a friend of mine. That one over there is a copy of Donatello's—but of course you know it without my telling you."

Talking gaily, and drawing from Arthur his opinions on this and that piece of sculpture, he led him around the studio.

And Arthur tried his best to take an interest in everything; though all the while his eyes kept wandering wistfully to the cloth-covered group at the end of the studio.

But it was not until he had shown Arthur everything else that the sculptor approached the large group, saying:

"After all, my heart is nowhere but here, now. I think this will be my masterpiece, Mr. Raymond. That is why I begged you so hard to pose for me. Perhaps when you have seen it you will have pity on"—he interrupted himself to smile at Arthur.

"I am afraid not," said the latter; but if the sculptor was noting he must have been aware that Arthur was not as firm and vig-

orous in his refusal as he had previously been.

Mr. Bernardo stood with the cloth in his hand, delaying withdrawing it while he talked to Arthur.

"You will notice that this group contains four figures, a man, a woman and two children. I have done nothing excepting on the woman. I am sure you will admit that the female figure is magnificent. It is only slightly draped."

He drew the cloth away with an almost loving slowness of movement, and Arthur found himself catching his breath in the rapt excitement of the moment. It was to him rather as if the model herself were being revealed to him, and he gazed upon the figure before him with the deepest reverence.

He had never seen anything so beautiful before; and the longer he looked the more it seemed to him that he saw before him a living, breathing body.

"Well?" said the artist in a low tone.

"Exquisite," was all Arthur could say.

It was the form of a fully developed woman at the period of her greatest beauty. Some soft, clinging draperies hung from one shoulder

and were wound gracefully around her waist and hips. She was pointing upward with the finger of her right hand, and the poise of her head gave her an appearance of proud dignity.

There was a harmony of contour in every curve of the figure. The arms were slightly larger than are seen in the average woman, but they were exquisitely rounded and proportioned. The hands were not small, but they were almost perfect in shape.

One side of the bust was uncovered. It showed the full, well-rounded outlines that come with firm flesh and strong muscles. The waist curved inward, and was a trifle small for a figure of this size. Down the center of the back of the figure, beginning at the nape of the neck, was a deep furrow, and at each side there were round mounds of white flesh, formed by the firm and beautiful muscles. The hips swelled out from the waist with an almost matronly curve, so large were they, although every line was perfect. The limbs were large and finely proportioned, the ankles and knees being small, while the swell at the calves and thighs was just enough to give the right taper for perfect contour.

Arthur was silent so long that the sculptor turned his eyes on him and studied him, realizing with delight that he was fairly entranced.

"You will pose?" he said at length. "You will do me this favor?"

"It is the most beautiful thing I ever saw," Arthur breathed. "It would be an honor to represent the male type by the side of such a magnificent specimen of womanhood."

"Say you will pose, then," pleaded Bernardo. "It was in order that I might win your consent that I prevailed on Miss Bertram to at once permit you to see this and to know her."

"Miss Bertram!" murmured Arthur.

"Miss Helen Bertram. You will pose, Mr. Raymond?"

"I should see her in that case?" he asked in a low tone.

"If you will come to-morrow at three o'clock. She will be through by that time and I can present you; but, Mr. Raymond," he added, with dignified seriousness, "she is a lady in the finest sense of the word; a noble woman."

"If she were not I would rather never see her again."

"Forgive me the warning!"

"Thank you, rather."

When Arthur went home that evening he forgot to cast his usual wistful glance at the windows of the Winsted house; and Amelia, hidden behind the lace curtains, uttered a little cry and a surprised sob. It was the first time that had happened since the day of their broken engagement.

* * * * *

CHAPTER XV

When Arthur left the breakfast table, the morning following his interview with Mr. Bernardo, he was followed by his sister Margie, who drew him into her room when they reached it.

"Arthur, dear," she exclaimed, as soon as she had closed the door, "I have something to tell you which I am sure will please you."

He took her by the arm and led her to a chair by the window, with so much of his old cheerfulness of manner that she looked at him wonderingly and demanded:

"Has Herbert told you?"

"He hasn't told me anything particularly pleasant lately."

"Well," said Margie, "I haven't seen you looking so cheerful for a long time, and if Herbert hasn't told you I don't see how— You haven't been talking with Amelia, have you?" she demanded suddenly.

"No," answered Arthur, with sudden seriousness, "I have not."

"Well, I have," cried Margie, with a return of enthusiasm as she was reassured as to her secret. "Sit down there, and I'll tell you something to make you happy."

It was rather a startled than a happy expression that leaped into Arthur's eyes at his sister's words, and he sat down and looked out of the window in such a way as to prevent her from seeing his full face.

He could not have told himself, if he had tried, why he was embarrassed and why he should wish to hide his embarrassment from his sister; but he was perfectly conscious of a singular sense of disturbance within him.

"I haven't said anything about it before," Margie went on, "because I didn't feel that there was anything definite to speak of, but now there is. What would you say if I told you that Amelia wore no corsets yesterday?"

"No corsets!" murmured Arthur, with a sudden sense of depression, instead of the joy he felt he should have experienced.

"No corsets," cried Margie, triumphantly. "And what is more, she says she doesn't mean to wear them again."

"No?" he said, in a low tone, his eyes still fixed in a stare out of the window.

"Doesn't that make you happy?" she demanded, joyously.

"Oh, yes."

"I didn't go to her, though I wanted to from the very first," she went on, eagerly. "She came to me. The best of it is that it was mother and Maude who drove her to me by their condemnation of you. She came frankly and told me she wanted to hear my side."

"If she had only come to me!" Arthur said in a low tone; his thoughts busy all the while with the wonder that he did not feel more enthusiasm.

"Now, don't be a simpleton, Arthur," cried Margie, her affectionate tone robbing her words of any unpleasantness; "you know she couldn't very well do that after you'd had a quarrel over the matter. I think she has shown not only very nice feeling, but a great deal more courage and honesty than many girls under the same circumstances. It won't hurt you to make the first overtures. You're not going to be obstinate about it, are you, Arthur?"

"Obstinate about what?" he asked, slowly.

"Oh, well, I know it's not my business,

Arthur; and I don't mean to meddle. Let me tell you first all about what has happened. Don't you want me to?"

"Certainly. Oh, yes!"

"Well, she came to me—oh, it must be two weeks ago—and asked me to tell her how I made myself so strong, and if I really was as well as I looked, and did I actually have no aches and pains inside of me."

"Poor little Amelia!"

"Dear little thing! She is an honest little creature and has lots more sense than any one would suppose who only knew her from her pretty, petulant ways; hasn't she?"

"Yes, indeed."

"We talked it all over. I told her all I knew and urged her to try the natural methods first. Maude all the time was urging her to try an operation, as the doctor advised."

"I think he's as much knave as fool," cried Arthur.

"Maybe he is. Anyhow, Amelia has been exercising under my instruction—of course, Herbert told me just what to do—and has been feeling so much better that yesterday she discarded corsets for good and all, she is so convinced of the benefit of our way."

"She is sure to get well, then," Arthur said, in a low tone.

"Maude doesn't know it yet," Margie laughed. "How outraged she will be when she does. But oh, Arthur!" with a sudden change to seriousness, "did you know that Maude was going to undergo an operation?"

"No," cried he, starting to his feet.

"Yes, she is; it was decided yesterday. She doesn't wish you or Herbert to know anything about it for fear you will make a fuss. I have said everything I could against it."

"I'll speak to her now," Arthur said, moving toward the door, perhaps not realizing, himself, his relief at being able to end the conversation about Amelia.

But Margie had no notion of permitting the subject of Amelia to be so summarily dismissed; for she had worked eagerly with their little neighbor with the one end in view of bringing the two lovers together once more.

"But, Arthur!" she cried, "you must know more about Amelia. She and I have had ever so many talks, and I know that she means to give up all her old foolish notions. She is quite converted to the belief

that you were quite right in taking the stand you did about her health and its relation to motherhood."

She paused and looked inquiringly at Arthur. He looked studiously at the floor, tracing the pattern of the rug with the toe of his shoe.

"Doesn't it make you happy to hear that?" she demanded, suddenly.

"Surely it does."

"And you won't be so mean as to hold out for an apology or anything of that sort from her, will you?"

"I hope she won't think of such a thing," he answered, hesitatingly.

"She has been so womanly and so sensible," said Margie. "As soon as she had made up her mind to look into the matter she did it with a will, putting all prejudice away. And I am sure she expected to please you by doing so, Arthur. Not that she would have done it for that alone, of course."

"No, I suppose not," Arthur said, lamely; so lamely that Margie cried out:

"What is the matter, Arthur? Why are you not pleased with what I have told you? Are you angry with me for meddling?"

"Oh, no, Margie! You have done what I should have expected you to do. And I am glad that Amelia means to resort to the natural method of cure for her ailments; very glad."

"But you don't seem glad—not glad in the way I would have supposed. It isn't because you are too proud to make the first overtures for a reconciliation, is it?"

"Oh, no Margie."

"There wasn't anything else in your quarrel excepting about her health, was there?"

"There was hardly a quarrel, Margie," he aid evasively.

"Well, won't you go in to see her this morning before you go down to the office? She is such a dear little thing, Arthur! and I know it will encourage her to know that she is back in her old place in your heart. Will you go in? I know I have no right to urge you, Arthur dear, but when I know your happiness is at stake, how can I help saying more than strict propriety sanctions?"

"I won't go this morning, Margie. I want time to think it over."

"Oh, Arthur!" Margie cried, going close

to him, a startled look in her eyes; "don't you love her any more?"

"Don't question me, Margie," he answered, in a troubled tone.

"But, Arthur," she said, "I've watched you night and morning ever since the trouble, and I've felt so sorry to see how wistfully you've looked up at her house as you passed it. You have looked at it, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have."

"And, Arthur, you ought to know that Amelia has stood there behind the curtains just to see you go—"

"Don't, Margie! don't!" he interrupted, a frown of pain furrowing his brow; "you mustn't tell me any more. I don't know what is the matter—I mean I am not sure; I don't understand myself. I must take time to think. Forgive me, Margie, dear! I know how strange this must seem to you, but it is just as strange to me. If you had told me yesterday, perhaps—" He stopped suddenly, his own words bringing up before him the image of that perfect woman he had seen yesterday, whom he was to see again to-day if he would. And, as if a door had suddenly been thrown open on the truth, he understood

why he had not rejoiced in the possibility of winning Amelia back.

"Yesterday!" repeated Margie, shaking her head sorrowfully. "Oh, Arthur! is there some one else?"

"What do you mean?"

"Are you engaged to some one else? Have you allowed your anger to—"

"No, Margie, no. I have not been angry with Amelia; I am not angry now. I am not engaged to any one, nor likely to be. I have not spoken twenty words to any woman since our engagement was broken. Now, don't question me any more, for I don't want to answer."

"Oh, Arthur," sighed his sister; "and suppose Amelia loses interest in getting well?"

"I hope she won't do that, Margie. Why should she? She isn't trying to get well for my sake, but for her own."

"I am sure she will not care for health unless she has you, too."

"Would that be reasonable?" he asked, in a pained tone.

"When one loves, one does not expect to be reasonable," Margie answered, in an of-

fended tone. "The time was, Arthur, when you did not set so much store by reasonableness. I am afraid I don't understand you. I was sure you loved Amelia or I would not have taken the interest I have in trying to bring about a reconciliation."

It seemed to Arthur that if he had chosen he could have said something to the point on the subject of being saved from his friends; but he knew that Margie had been disinterested, and he loved her too well to hurt her feelings. Besides, he was not prepared to say anything definite; he was not sure whether he did or did not love Amelia.

Indeed, he knew that he did love her, perhaps as much as ever he had, but it seemed to him that he now had quite a different idea of what the love of a man for a woman might be.

But he was sure of nothing excepting that a new element, hitherto undreamed of, had entered his life, putting all his thoughts and ideas in confusion. He turned to his sister and took her two hands in his.

"Margie, dear," he said, "please don't be offended with me. I want to do just what is right and best, and surely it is not my fault

if I don't see my way clearly. I am grateful to you for all your loving anxiety to help me. I can't tell you now what is troubling me, but when my mind is made up I will come to you. You are the best friend I have; and I don't believe any other fellow ever had a better sister than I have."

The ready tears filled Margie's eyes as she listened; and when Arthur had bent over and kissed her, she said affectionately:

"All right, Arthur! I'll trust you to do what you think right. Forget my petulance and go talk to them downstairs before father goes away. I don't believe he half likes the idea of the operation."

Glad to escape any further discussion of his relations with Amelia, Arthur hastened from the room and went back to the dining-room, passing Herbert on the stairs, and being thus assured of finding only his father, mother and sister there.

With his brain all in a turmoil with the thoughts aroused by his talk with Margie, he would have been glad to avoid such a talk as was before him if possible; but as he did not know how soon the operation might take place, he felt that he must not delay;

for to him an operation under the circumstances was nothing less than a crime.

They were evidently through breakfast when he entered the room, and it was equally evident that his coming interrupted a conversation which probably had been started on the departure of Herbert from the room.

"I'm afraid I'm in the way," he said, noting their embarrassed silence, "but I want to say something before I go down to the office. I hope you won't think I'm intrusive, Maudie; but I want to say something about your operation."

"Margie has told you," she cried, flushing angrily. "She had no right to do that. Well, it doesn't make any difference, and you may as well save your breath, for nothing you can say will alter my determination."

"Don't be so positive, Maude," her father said; "I'd like to have Arthur's opinion, now that he knows about it."

"Well, I don't mind his giving his opinion," said Mrs. Raymond, "but I must say I don't see how he can know anything about such a matter. In my time such a thing as a boy having any opinion on such a subject was un-

heard of. I suppose it is all a part of the new method."

"Now, mother," said Arthur, going around to her chair and lovingly caressing her, "you mustn't take sides against me right away. Besides, I am not going to try to make Maudie do anything against her reason."

"I should hope not," was Maude's uncompromising ejaculation.

"Somehow," said Mr. Raymond, "I don't altogether like the idea of an operation myself. It seems as if it were a thing that once done could never be undone."

He spoke slowly and almost wearily; and as Arthur looked anxiously at his face it seemed to him that he had never seen it so drawn and haggard; but it was no time to dwell on that, for Maude had spoken up quickly:

"Of course it can never be undone; that's why it is done."

"That would be a fine thing," said Arthur, "if the operation were entirely successful; but if a failure, then what?"

"Well," retorted poor Maude irritably, "if you are a prophet and can see into the future, tell me what the result will be; but if

you are not—and I never heard that you were—why do you set up your judgment against that of a doctor who has spent his life in gaining the knowledge you presume to despise. For my part, I refuse to discuss the matter with you. I should think you had had enough of interfering."

"Maudie! Maudie!" murmured the mother, whose heart went out to Arthur in the hour of his trouble.

"Well, I don't mean to say unkind things, mother, but Arthur is unreasonable in pretending to know better than the doctor. Just because he became well at the time he began to exercise, he thinks he cured himself, forgetting all the skill and the medicine of the doctor."

"I shall never forget his medicine," said Arthur.

"Maudie is right about that," Mrs. Raymond said. "I don't see how you can have the courage to set up your opinion against a doctor's."

"I suppose you have some better reason for doing so, Arthur," interposed his father, "than simply because your return to health and your giving up the doctor were coincident.

"Yes, I have. In the first place I have looked somewhat into the history of medicine, and I have learned that from the earliest times the doctors have persecuted those who tried to drag the practice of medicine out of the ruts into which it had fallen."

"That is an easy charge to bring against any system, my son," Mr. Raymond said, gravely; "but conservatism is a good thing, notwithstanding."

"I understand that, father. It would be unwise to change at the word of every hare-brained fellow who came along with a theory; but at least the men whose pawns are life and death should not play their game recklessly, refusing to listen to the remonstrances of their victims—patients they call them. Why, do you know the first victim to the witch-craft delusion in this country was a sacrifice offered to the conservatism of the doctors?"

"I am afraid you are willing to distort the facts in seeking arguments against medical men," said Mr. Raymond, deprecatingly.

"No, indeed; it's an historical fact. It was in the year 1648, and the poor woman was

Margaret Jones, of Charlestown, Massachusetts. The doctors in those days believed in bleeding their patients, giving them violent purges and emetics; Margaret Jones had the sensible notion that such measures weakened and injured sick people. She gave herb tonics and simple prescriptions and her patients got well where those of the learned doctors died; so the doctors brought a charge of witchcraft against her, and she was hanged. Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts is the authority for that story."

"Anything might have happened two hundred and fifty years ago," said Maude, scornfully.

"Well, the story shows what the attitude of the doctors was then; and that doctors haven't changed much since. Why, they went on with their bleeding and purging for one hundred and fifty years longer, refusing to learn anything, until at last they killed the best man in the world at that time with their wretched conservatism, which was only another name for hide-bound ignorance."

"Arthur, Arthur! don't be violent."

"I don't mean to be, father. And I tell only the truth. It is admitted now that

Washington might well have lived through the bad cold he had but for the way the doctors bled and purged and vomited and blistered and poulticed him. He was in full vigor except for a cold he had taken. Then the doctors got at him in the good old way, sanctified by use, and bled him three times, taking a quart of blood from him the last time. Think of that!"

"It probably isn't true," said Maude.

"But it is a matter of record," answered Arthur. "But the bleeding was only a part of their scientific treatment. They gave him great doses of calomel to purge him, tartar emetic to vomit him, blisters to scarify him, and poultices to finish him, I suppose. And just for a cold from which he would have recovered in a day or two if he had refrained from food and had drunk freely of water."

"To-day isn't a hundred years ago," said his mother; "and it would be singular if the doctors hadn't learned something."

"Of course they have learned something; but the chief of their learning is to despise the common-sense of a layman. What use have they for natural and easy methods when they

live for their mysterious Latin and poor writing?"

"Well, well!" said Mr. Raymond, "of course there is something in what you say; but how does all this affect Maude's case? Do you pretend that you can cure her?"

"I can't, father; nor do I pretend to; but I do say that when a rational and absolutely harmless system of cure is offered, it should be tried before resorting to the knife. If my way fails, it will be time then to think of the surgeon."

"What do you say, Maude?" inquired her father.

"I say no; I say I am sick of Arthur's preaching. I know what will be demanded of me; I must take off my corsets, I must eat two meals a day—perhaps they'll give me only one—I must drink water just when I don't want it—between meals. I must stop eating meat, and, for all I know, eat raw food. Oh! it is enough to make one tired of life only to hear them. Look at Margie! She eats two meals a day, goes without corsets, has no style at all and—Oh, I just won't listen to a word more."

"Maudie, dear," said Arthur, affectionately,

"I know it must seem to you that we are a lot of cranks; and I admit that we are enthusiastic and talk more about the matter than must be quite agreeable; but I am thinking only of your good. It isn't to have my own way that I urge this; I wish you would believe that."

"Well, I don't mean to be cross, Arthur, and I am sorry if I have said anything to hurt your feelings, but I would rather trust the doctor and I will."

"But Margie is well and strong, Maudie. See what color she has! how bright and clear her eyes are! how vigorously she walks! And mother will admit that she never knew a woman get well so soon after the birth of her baby. And Margie was no stronger as a girl than Maude; was she, mother?"

"No-o."

"I don't care! I don't care! I won't be tormented any more. I have a right to decide for myself; and I will not make myself hideous to please anybody," cried Maude, starting to her feet and at the same time bursting into tears. "One would think operations were always failures, instead of successes."

"Successes for the surgeons," murmured Arthur, sorrowfully.

"Well, say no more, my son; Maude must decide. She has heard what you have to say, and she makes her choice."

CHAPTER XVI

And so ended Arthur's effort to save his sister from the hands of the surgeon. He tried to discuss the subject with his father and mother, but they only assured him that Maude was determined, and that nothing but hard feeling could come of his insistence.

Saddened by this painful discussion, saddened also by thoughts of his new attitude toward Amelia just at a time when it was certain that he had only to go to her to renew his old, pleasant relations with her, and under the very best auspices, Arthur put on his hat for his walk down to the office.

But as he did so a sudden thought flashed into his brain and caused him to start. For a month he had passed the house next door, looking each morning and again each night at the windows of the hospitable parlor, seeking some sign from the little creature who was mistress there.

Now he knew that she had seen him go by, had watched him as his eyes had scanned

the windows; he knew that she would be there this morning, that she had been there last night. And now he recalled that for the first time he had last night failed to look up.

Should he now, knowing that she hid behind the curtains with a wistful heart, look up? Dared he do so, knowing that another, an utter stranger to him too, had the power to thrill him as Amelia never had done?

And what was the meaning of this power over his senses of this beautiful stranger? Was it love? How could it be love when he did not dare know her? Was it passion? Not if passion were a degrading emotion, for whatever it was that stirred and thrilled him, even to think of her exalted him.

Suddenly he made up his mind and strode from the house. He passed the windows next door, his eyes fixed steadfastly straight before him.

"He did not look up! He no longer loves her!" Margie murmured, watching him from her room.

"Why didn't he look up?" wailed little Amelia from her covert behind the curtain.

Why, indeed? It was still as much a rid-

dle to him as to her. He felt that he still loved her as much as ever; there was no diminution in his interest in her; he was glad she had turned to natural methods for the cure of her ailments; he hoped she would become as strong and as beautiful as it was possible to be.

But when he thought of Helen Bertram his blood quickened; when he thought of Amelia it was only with affectionate concern.

He thought much of Amelia during the first ten minutes of his walk; then gradually less and less of her and more and more of Helen, whom he was to meet again that afternoon.

He recalled with delight the tones of her full, rich voice; the droop of the long, heavy lashes on the rounded cheek, the sweeping curves of her magnificent figure; the assured, elastic step; the superb carriage.

The walk had never seemed so short to him as on that morning. His head was very near the clouds. As he passed along Broadway there came a jarring note into the harmony of his delightful imaginings, for as he crossed Thirtieth street a chance glance toward Sixth avenue showed him Charles Morgan engaged in earnest conversation with

some one whose back was turned toward Arthur.

His fued with Morgan, if it could be called such, had ended, so far as he was concerned, with the struggle at the gymnasium for the championship; but there was something in the man that antagonized him.

He passed on with accelerated step, his pleasant thoughts dissipated by the sight of his enemy. Then he became conscious of a peculiar operation of his brain; he was dwelling on a sense of familiarity in the back of the person he had seen talking with Morgan.

He dismissed the problem and came back to it again, trying to connect the back with any person known to him, but always in vain. He reached the office with his thoughts still on the irritating problem.

It seemed to him that the bookkeeper looked at him in an odd way, but he dismissed the thought at once; though at a later day he recalled the circumstance, and had reason to wish he had given more heed to it at the time.

There was so much work for him to do, however, that he was soon oblivious of everything else, and so remained for hour after

hour; for he had thoroughly cultivated the faculty of completely absorbing himself in the task he had to do.

It is possible that during all those hours there was a sub-consciousness of the gracious personality he was to know better when his work was done, but, if so, it rather helped than hindered his efficiency; for all that he did was characterized by a buoyancy that had been lacking in him for a month past.

Then, at last, the moment came for him to set out for the studio. He freshened himself with a dash of cold water on his face, and left the office with a beating heart, and with such a joyous expression shining in his eyes that one of the clerks said to the other:

"I'll bet he's landed a good commission to-day."

But the largest sum of money ever made never filled the soul of a money-getter with the exultation that thrilled Arthur as he left the office and its cares and strode away toward the studio of the sculptor.

It was little wonder that as he passed along the street both men and women turned to have a second look at him, as if they found in him the embodiment of that exulta-

tion in mere living which every human being craves.

But at the door of the studio, Arthur's exultation in the mere fact of living gave way to a timidity quite new in his experience. It struck him that he was going to meet Helen Bertram with a joy in which she probably was quite a stranger. For anything he knew she might regard him with even less than indifference.

So it was in a very subdued condition of mind that he entered the reception room to wait for the coming of Mr. Bernardo.

He tried to allay his growing nervousness by looking at the pictures that hung on the walls, but in spite of anything he could do his thoughts would dwell on Helen Bertram.

Perhaps, having seen him the previous day, she had decided not to meet him. What could be more natural, in fact, than that she should not care to meet him? Why should she care to? One so beautiful would probably be so sought after by men that she would be indifferent to him. Yes, of course, he must prepare himself to have the sculptor come in and say Miss Bertram had already gone home.

He had never in his life been so sure that

he was a very foolish young man. Here he had engaged himself to pose for Mr. Bernardo with no other object in the world but to meet Miss Bertram—he was painfully conscious of that fact at that particular moment—and now he realized that the probabilities were that she would not care to meet him.

"No," he murmured to himself, "I don't see why she should care to meet me; but"—and he made a sudden gesture of determination—"I want to meet her; and meet her I will."

At this moment the sound of a footfall reached his ear, and he almost stopped breathing in order that he might determine whether or not two persons were approaching.

He was sure but one person was coming, and his heart sank; then he was sure he heard the swish of a skirt; but, of course, that was only the big apron the sculptor wore.

He knew better all the time, but fortified himself against disappointment by offering himself explanations. It was a woman's skirt he heard rustle; then, of course, it could not be Miss Bertram, for she would surely be accompanied by Mr. Bernardo.

He kept his back to the door even after

the lady had entered the room, determined not to allow himself a delusive hope; although he was fairly quivering with the hope and the actual belief that Helen Bertram stood in the doorway.

"Is this Mr. Raymond?"

He was face about and half-way across the room in an instant. It was the voice whose tones were still ringing in his memory. It was Helen Bertram who stood there smiling frankly at him.

"Ye—yes," he stammered. "And you are Miss"—he swallowed a little lump in his throat —"Miss Bertram."

She laughed softly and held out her hand with a charming absence of conventional reserve.

It seemed to Arthur he had never listened to such music as the low laugh that came rippling through the parted, red lips. As for the hand he grasped in his, the touch of it sent such a thrill through him that he dared not hold it.

"This is a very informal way of becoming acquainted, Mr. Raymond," she said, gaily, "but it is all Mr. Bernardo's fault. He would have business of extreme importance to take

him suddenly away, so that I could not refuse to present myself to you, and at the same time make his apologies and be sure that you did not escape him."

Her manner was so simple, her speech so frank, and she bore herself with such a gracious dignity, that Arthur felt himself put instantly at his ease at the same time that hopelessness of ever winning so peerless a creature overwhelmed him.

For that he wished to win her he knew positively. He knew as well as if he had studied the matter for ten years that he was in the presence of the woman who embodied for him the perfection of her sex and the complement of his own individuality.

"So far from accepting Mr. Bernardo's apologies," he found himself saying with an eagerness he tried in vain to wholly suppress, "I feel that I owe him my gratitude. I wanted to meet you again when we met at the doorway; and after I had seen—" He stopped in confusion, wondering what she would think of a so tactless a fellow as he was showing himself. "Pardon me!" he exclaimed, after a moment's pause, and with an ingenuous frankness that dissipated at

once the expression of hauteur that had crept into her eyes at his evident reference to her effigy in the group in the studio; "and please do not misunderstand me. Beauty of form is so impersonal to me that I had no idea of paying you a compliment."

"I am glad of that," she answered, her beautiful eyes glowing with earnestness; "for I abhor pretty speeches in just about the same degree that I love honesty and frankness."

"But," cried Arthur, so ingenuously that Helen could not help smiling, "if I allow myself to be honest and frank with you, I cannot help making pretty speeches."

"Well," she laughed, "I am sure I know a cure for your trouble. You want to tell me how beautiful you think me, and Mr. Bernardo that you really know what I shall not mind at all since I know from beauty of form is; so say whatever you please; only remember that I shall watch you for errors and shall know how to distinguish flattery from truth."

"I can only say I have no wish to flatter you," Arthur answered; "but it is true that I could not help being impressed by the magnificence of your form because so few women

pay any attention whatever to their physical development, but give all their thoughts to the false and inartistic semblance which the dressmaker prescribes."

"That is only because women are ignorant as yet, and men are not much wiser than they, Mr. Raymond. We are speaking frankly and without foolish vanity, so that I may bring it home to you as you have to me. Mr. Bernardo tells me, and I have no difficulty in believing him, that you are the most perfectly developed man he has ever seen; but that a few years ago you were a physical wreck."

"That is absolutely true; I was thought to be dying."

"And why did you develop your body?"

Arthur flushed and hesitated; then spoke frankly:

"I don't now that I am altogether proud of the reason that animated me, Miss Bertram, but I suppose you want the truth. I had been grossly insulted by a man who was greatly my superior in physical strength, and I wished to conquer him."

"Charles Morgan?" she gasped, involuntarily.

"Yes. How did you guess? Do you know him?" he demanded, in a startled tone.

"I have heard of him; and—and you know it was with him you had the contest."

"Oh, yes, of course. I am glad you don't know him. I—I would not like to think you knew that man. Yes, I worked so hard to make myself strong in order that I might punish him for his insults to me."

She made an effort, which escaped Arthur, to control her agitation, and then went on in a tone of simulated indifference:

"And you had no thought of striving for mere beauty of form at the time?"

"Why, at first, I would have laughed at anybody who had spoken to me of such a thing; but while I was at work at the gymnasium something called my attention to the Greek and Roman athletes; and from that I was almost forced to see the artistic side of development. I bought plaster casts of famous sculptures and studied them until I became more an enthusiast on the subject of beauty than of strength."

Helen Bertram listened with delight, and cried out the instant he was silent:

"You can understand me, then, when I

say that men are not much less ignorant than women. What does the average man think of beauty? Why, to him that woman is beautiful whom the artist knows to be deformed. We are so afraid of the real man or woman—the nude—that few of us have any conception of what real beauty of form is. We admire that which is deformed and distorted, when we should be glorifying only that which is perfect."

"That is true! Oh, how true it is!" cried Arthur. "Why, excepting a sister of mine, you are the only woman I have ever met who held such views."

"Then, you see," she went on, so charmed at finding a sympathetic soul that she forgot everything but the opportunity to express herself, "our notions of beauty being so false, we look upon beauty rather as an accident and are vain of it, when in fact we should only rejoice in it and strive honestly and openly to attain to it."

"Yes," he said, "I know I am called vain, when I am only frankly conscious of a good body. I did not know until Mr. Bernardo praised me that I was so much better formed than most others."

"Speaking of Mr. Bernardo," she said, "he told me something I had never thought of before, but which I have found to be true since. He said that many men are called handsome and many women beautiful who have not good health; but that it is impossible for one to have a really beautiful body without health."

"What you meant, then, about men being as ignorant as women was that they knew no more about real beauty?"

"Yes," she answered; "and I think we shall not be better men and women until we know what beauty is and try to attain it."

"Ah," murmured Arthur admiringly, "you don't know how much good it does me to meet such a wholesome woman as you."

"If I did not feel as I do I could not pose as I do for Mr. Bernardo," she said. "It is true that I pose because I need the money, but if I needed it a thousand times more I would not pose unless I felt the glory, the dignity, the purity of a beautiful body. I assure you, I enjoy the beautiful curves of that clay figure in the studio quite as much as if they had been copied from a body I had never seen."

Listening to her musical voice, looking into her clear, truthful eyes, it seemed to Arthur that he was in the presence of a superior being who, by the mere emanation from her person, kept all impurity and baseness from her.

"I shall take a higher view of things from having had this talk with you," he said, earnestly. "I hope we may be good friends, and that we may meet again. You know I have engaged to pose for Mr. Bernardo, and shall be here daily from this time forward."

It seemed to him that she gave a faint start as she listened, and seemed to wrap herself in a new reserve as if she regretted the freedom of the talk she had already had, and would avoid its repetition.

"I am afraid," she said, gravely, "that I shall not be able to meet you soon again. It is inevitable that we should meet sometimes, but we would better recognize at once the fact that our ways diverge from the studio. In that group in there lies our only common ground."

"Why should you say that?" he demanded, almost passionately. "Are not our views of life, our daily and hourly thoughts of a simi-

lar character? It seems to me that on every side of us is common ground."

"You say that because you do not know," she said, sadly. "There is no common ground for you and me; and I hope you will take my word for it and not seek for a closer acquaintance than already exists. If I were not so impulsive I would have been more reticent to-day."

"I am glad you are impulsive, then," said Arthur; "and you should be, for you have done me incalculable good by what you have said. You say you like honesty and frankness; then let me say that I want to be good friends with you. I am sure there is no reason why we should not be."

He spoke of friendship, but he left no doubt in the mind of his hearer that friendship was but a mild term for a much more ardent emotion; and it was with difficulty that she controlled her agitation.

How much troubled she was by his insistence on continuing the friendly intercourse so auspiciously begun might have been guessed by the relief she betrayed when the front door of the house opened to admit Mr. Bernardo.

"Here he is!" she cried; "and now I must go. Good afternoon, Mr. Raymond! I have played hostess for you, Mr. Bernardo," she said, "but I must hurry away, for I am late. Good afternoon!"

"You will be here to-morrow, Miss Bertram?" the sculptor asked.

"If nothing prevents. Good afternoon, Mr. Raymond!" and she was gone.

"I am so rejoiced to see you, Mr. Raymond. I was afraid by going out I might lose you, and yet it was impossible to remain at home. You liked Miss Bertram, I am sure."

So said the sculptor, as he warmly shook Arthur by the hand. Arthur murmured an assent. Mr. Bernardo, in his energetic way, led him into the studio, descanting on the delight of having him for a model, and explaining to him just what he wished him to do.

Arthur listened in a preoccupied way for a while, and then turned abruptly to the sculptor and said:

"Mr. Bernardo, I owe you an explanation, which I am loath to make, but see no way of avoiding."

The sculptor stared at him in surprise. Arthur went on:

"To be perfectly frank with you, I came here to pose only because I wished to meet Miss Bertram again, after encountering her at your door yesterday."

"Really!"

"Yes, sir; and now that I have had a brief—too brief—talk with her I wish to meet her again. Mr. Bernardo, I am so drawn to her that I cannot be satisfied unless I am privileged to see and talk with her often. Please don't say anything for one moment! I know how extraordinary this must seem to you, but it is as I tell you. I owe it to you to tell you this, and I beg of you to find the means to enable me to meet Miss Bertram."

"But, sir—permit me to say that I honor you for your manly, straightforward conduct, as well as admire your judgment—I really know of no reason why you need appeal to me for assistance in the matter. She comes here each day, and you have only to come also. I wish you joy, Mr. Raymond."

"She says she does not wish our acquaintance to ripen into anything more than exists

at present. She says our ways diverge from this studio."

"You surprise me. I only know of her that she is poor, and has a mother to support. I discovered her in a gymnasium where she was teaching girls, and I persuaded her to pose for me. She had never done such a thing before, but when I made it clear that I was a man of honor, she came. I believe that she was as much drawn by her love of beauty as by the reward, much as she needed the money."

"And you know of no reason why she should refuse to know me? You do not know of anybody else who has any claim on her?"

"On the contrary, she has told me more than once that her mother was the only person who held any place in her life."

"Then," cried Arthur, "it can only be some dislike for me that moves her. Well, I will conquer that! I must conquer it!"

"Dislike of you!" repeated the sculptor, with an amused glance at the handsome young man. "I don't believe that. I hope you will not give up too easily, Mr. Raymond," he added, earnestly, "for if ever I saw

two human beings suited to each other for the highest purpose of marriage, you are the two."

Give up easily!" cried Arthur, his eyes flashing. "I'll not give up at all. I cannot give up. No. I mean to win Helen Bertram."

CHAPTER XVII

ARTHUR found posing far more difficult than he had imagined it would be, but Mr. Bernardo not only made frequent breaks for rest, but sympathetically talked of Helen, telling Arthur of her sweet, strong character as it had been revealed to him during the hours of her posing.

"If I only knew," said Arthur once, in a dejected tone, "if there were someone else who had a claim upon her affections."

"I feel that I can assure you on that score," said the other kindly. "She has said many times that she had no acquaintances almost, and was alone with her mother. I think they have quite recently come from Philadelphia."

"It seems impossible that she has no admirers, she is so beautiful, so attractive."

"Ah, yes, but so reserved. And I think I may tell you that from the first she has taken a keen interest in you. I told her the next day after your bout with Morgan about

you, and she betrayed the liveliest desire to hear all about you."

"Did she?"

"Indeed she did, and to my surprise was willing to meet you, for she has always refused to dine with my wife and me to meet any of our friends."

"I suppose she wished to see me because of my strength," said Arthur. "She could be moved by no other consideration; and I am sure there is nothing in that to give me cause for elation."

Mr. Bernardo smiled at Arthur's despondent tone. It seemed to him amusing that so handsome a fellow should have such serious doubts of his attractiveness; though, at the same time, he respected him for his modesty.

"It may no cause for elation," he answered, "but, on the other hand, it is no cause for depression. She knew nothing about you but what I had told her, and naturally I spoke of what had most impressed me—your marvelous development and strength."

It was probably a very good thing for Arthur that he had the kindly, sympathetic sculptor to talk to at that time, for, as matters stood, he could not have gone to

Margie to talk of Helen, and but for the accident that made Mr. Bernardo his natural confidant, he would have been obliged to restrain himself altogether and give no audible expression to the strenuous emotion which had so suddenly and completely possessed him.

When at last the posing was over, he did not return to the office, nor yet go home, but struck across Union Square to Fourth avenue, as being quieter than Broadway, and so went up to Central Park by way of Madison avenue to Fifty-ninth street.

Anything like such a perturbation of mind as he was now experiencing he had never known before. He was at once exalted by the divine passion that thrilled him, and subdued to despondency by a sense of unworthiness. He was sure that Helen was unaffected by the emotion that mastered him, and he was at the same time determined to win her if that were humanly possible.

At one moment he was amazed at himself for yielding so completely to one he had met but twice; and at the next he was comparing with equal wonder the sentiment which now possessed him with that which he had felt for

Amelia. The regard, the love even, which he had felt for Amelia still remained, but it was no more to be compared with the throbbing emotion which now mastered him than an ant hill is to be compared with an active volcano.

It was late when he reached home, but his long walk had done him good. His mind was clear of small doubts, and his purpose was plain before him. It was not now so much that he was determined to woo Helen as that he knew he must; he was so powerfully drawn to her.

Dinner was over for the other members of the family, when he went into the house, so that he had no hesitation about first having his bath before going to the dining room.

He ate with a calmness that would have been impossible an hour earlier. He had no more hope of winning Helen Bertram now than before, but he had a fixed and definite purpose, and he knew that he loved her.

It was his custom to go to Margie's room whenever he had any time at home, partly because he and his sister were such good friends, but chiefly, perhaps, because he loved little Gertrude so dearly. All children ap-

pealed strongly to him, whether white or black, clean or dirty; but this one little mite was so close to him that he sometimes almost forgot that it was not his own.

It was too late to see the baby this evening, but he went as usual to Margie's room, after eating; and when his sister looked inquiringly at him, she saw that he had come with the intention of telling her something, and at once she leaped to the conclusion that that something related to Amelia.

Herbert, too, suspected the same thing, and in a few minutes made an excuse for leaving the room, thinking to leave them alone to have their talk; but Arthur stopped him, saying frankly:

"Don't go, Herbert. I want to say something to Margie, but I'd like you to be here if you don't mind."

"Certainly," Herbert said, and sat down again.

There followed a few moments of embarrassed silence, but before Margie could say anything, with her woman's tact, to relieve the situation, Arthur had exclaimed:

"There isn't any easy to begin, Margie. It's about Amelia."

"Yes, dear."

"I am sure now that it was all a mistake. I am sure I never felt toward her as a man should toward the woman he would make his wife."

"You didn't love her, Arthur?"

"Oh yes, I did love her, and I do love her, but not as a man should his wife. If I had known the value and importance of physical attraction I would never have made the mistake of asking her to be my wife."

"But you felt that physical attraction before she was sick," Margie said reproachfully, "and you will feel it again when she has recovered her vitality and her beauty, through the efforts she is now making. Why, already she is a different girl, and if she were sure that you still loved her she would improve with marvelous rapidity."

"Margie," Arthur answered, with a conviction born of his new knowledge, "I never felt that physical attraction in its strength and fullness. I did not know what it was. I was ignorant."

"And you know now?" Margie demanded sharply.

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

There was a note of anger in the interrogation, for Margie was a strong partisan of her little friend next door, and was making her cause her own. But Arthur patiently ignored his sister's indignation and answered:

"It is no one you know."

"You are fickle," she cried. "I am not sure that you were not already tired of Amelia and only made her sickness an excuse for a rupture."

"Don't be unjust, Margie," Herbert said softly. "Don't forget that it was Amelia and not Arthur, who broke the engagement."

"He made a condition he knew she would not submit to," answered Margie quickly. "He knew she would refuse to do as he wished when he went to her."

Arthur might have reminded her that all that he did was done in accordance with her advice, but he wisely refrained from doing so, and said:

"I meant to be fair and honorable before, and I mean to be now, Margie; and I am sure you would be the first to bid me make no mistake. I do not love Amelia as a man

should love his wife, and for that reason I shall accept as final the rupture which she made."

"It will break her heart," said Margie. "Do you know I sometimes wish Herbert and you would think less of the physical side and more of the spiritual. Why, to be logical, Herbert should separate from me if I were to fall ill."

She said this with an air of having driven their argument into a corner from which it could not escape; but Herbert only smiled as he answered:

"If you are expecting any such outcome as that, Margie, dear, you will be sadly mistaken. My theory of marriage leads to no such pitiful results; but certainly if you were to become in any way a sickly, ailing woman, I would consider myself a criminal if I were to allow you to be the mother of my child; and you know that we do not advocate making the physical the only basis of marriage, although we do make it the most important."

"It seems to me to bear pretty hard on poor little Amelia," sighed Margie. "Here she is working with might and main to be

what Arthur wished her to be, and now he says he doesn't care what becomes of her."

"Oh, Margie!" murmured Arthur, in a hurt tone.

"I see it in an altogether different light," said Herbert. "It seems to me that anything that will bring Amelia to robust health must be a blessing; and her heart will be insured against breakage by the very health that is coming to her. Arthur isn't any more the only man in the world than she is the only woman, and you may be sure that when she meets the man who thrills at the sight and touch of her, she will experience the same feeling, and will realize that in losing Arthur she made the happiest escape of her life. I refuse to feel pity for Amelia. Think of our own happiness, Margie, and do not be so unkind as to wish less to two persons you love as much as you do Arthur and Amelia."

"All the same, I wish Arthur did love her," Margie sighed.

Herbert sprang up and caught her in his arms, laughing, and saying to Arthur as he did so:

"That means that she sees the matter

as we do, and will give up trying to force you into an unhappy marriage."

"It means that you have the best of the argument; not that you are right. That I shall have to think over quietly."

But when Arthur rose to go to his own room she laid her cheek against his in a way that assured him that he had her entire sympathy, and that the incident of Amelia was closed for her, so far as he was concerned.

In one sense the situation was no different from what it had been for him, but he went to sleep that night feeling that the last bond with the past had been severed, and that he was free now to turn his face toward the new sun which had risen in his life.

* * * * *

CHAPTER XVIII

The days that followed were full ones for Arthur. In order to accomplish all the work he had taken upon himself at the office he reached there an hour earlier each day, and worked until he left in the afternoon with a calm intensity that accomplished wonders. Then came the meeting and a few minutes' conversation with Helen; then the posing, and then the long walk, during which Helen engrossed all his thoughts.

But the few minutes with Helen were what he lived for. The old day ended with the meeting and the new day began when she left him.

The day of his second posing, by getting to the studio early, he contrived to have quite ten minutes' talk with her. The next day she hurried away after five minutes with him, and it seemed to him that he caught a look in her usually calm eyes that betokened a disturbed mind. The following day, although he was early, she was already leaving

the house. He cried out his disappointment and chagrin involuntarily.

"Why are you so early to-day?" he demanded, searching her eyes eagerly.

She looked down and answered confusedly:

"I—I was through, and—and I have something to do for mother."

"Oh!" murmured Arthur, devouring her with his eyes, and summoning his courage for one of the most daring requests imaginable. "May I not walk a little way with you? I am not due quite yet, and—and a little more exercise will be good for me."

"No, oh no!" she cried quickly; and it seemed to Arthur as if he had caught a frightened look in her eyes as they first swept the street, and then looked pleadingly at him. "Thank you, but I must hurry. Indeed I must."

"But you will not hurry away to-morrow?" he begged humbly.

"I—I don't know what I shall have to do to-morrow," she answered in a troubled tone. "Good day!"

Arthur watched her as she hurried up the street, and then went dejectedly into the house, the door having been left open for

him. He was certain that she suspected his love for her, and wished to show him that it was hopeless. He carried a very heavy heart with him on his walk that afternoon.

It was a good thing for him in these days that he had baby Gertrude to take into his confidence, for he did not feel that he could share this new passionate love with anybody else.

It was plain enough to his sister and to Herbert that the course of his love was not running smoothly, but there was nothing they could do to help, so they held their peace, except for pretending to jealousy because, as they said, he had won first place in the heart of little Gertrude.

The evening after Helen's hurried departure from the studio, Arthur thought the matter over in the sweet calm of the baby presence and came to a determination.

He was at the studio half an hour earlier than usual the following day. That was what he had made up his mind to do, and he did it, even though he fairly trembled with apprehension when he saw Helen enter the reception room where he sat, waiting for her.

She was undoubtedly early enough to have

been gone before his usual time of appearance, and she started with surprise when her eyes fell on him.

He saw her bite her lip as if to suppress an exclamation of annoyance, perhaps, and he went toward her deprecatingly, saying in an apologetic tone:

"I had the time to spare, so I came early, hoping I might have the pleasure of a few words with you."

It seemed to him that it was in her mind to refuse to remain, for she made a gesture as if to leave the room; but if that had been her intention, she abandoned it, and with a deep breath, as if another resolve had determined her, she sat down and smiled at him.

"I can spare a few minutes," she said in the gracious way that set his heart to beating tumultuously. "How your part of the group grows under the enthusiastic touch of Mr. Bernardo. You and I will have reason to be proud of the part we have been able to play."

From that the talk went on, and Arthur was soon at his ease. He did not reflect at the time on anything but the supreme delight of being in that wonderful presence; but

after she had gone he found himself wondering at her sudden graciousness when she had until then been so distant and disturbed; and she had as good as promised to meet him again on the following day.

"Shall you go home early to-morrow?" he had asked.

"No," she had answered, her eyes drooping under his eager gaze. "I shall go at my regular time."

And from that time, day after day, he and she met in the quiet reception room and talked. It is true that with all her graciousness and gentle womanliness she always kept him at a certain distance, but there were times when Arthur's heart was filled with a wild joy over the suspicion that she might care more for him than she was willing to let him know.

Sometimes at meeting, or at parting, there was a sudden expression in her eyes as if an emotion deep-seated in her heart had caught her off guard and had leaped up into view; but Arthur could never be sure of this, and his depression after his swift elation was proportionately deeper.

Nevertheless, as the days went by, and no

effort of his closed the gap which seemed to exist between them, he began to wonder if it must always be so. He had begged her to allow him to call on her; he had pleaded to be allowed to take his mother or sister to visit her. She had refused in troubled tones and with downcast eyes, but with a firmness that was like adamant.

It began to seem as if there were a mystery in her life, but Arthur would not permit himself to think such a thing. He told himself that it was only necessary to look into her clear, honest eyes to know that her life ran as limpid as a mountain brook in its passage through a quiet pool.

His love increased as the days went by, and if Helen sedulously avoided making any sign of returning his passion yet she no longer discouraged him, but fell into a delightful state of comradeship with him.

He did not mean to utter a word to betray his love, but it was impossible for her to have any doubt of it, for it showed itself in the caressing tones of his rich voice, in the glance of his eye, in the lingering touch of his hand when he bade her good-bye or greeted her.

Finally, one day, she betrayed a certain tenderness for him. He was sure of it, though it was but by a word now and again, by a look suddenly surprised in her wonderful eyes, by a tone or a gesture; and he was beside himself with hope.

When she bade him good-bye her hand trembled in his and was not withdrawn as quickly as usual; from her eyes shot a glance of pleading or pity or love, he could not be sure which, only that it sent a thrill through him; and her full under lip quivered so that her words were not as distinct as was common with her.

Than night he was happier than he had been at any time. It was almost as if a hope had been realized. He walked as if on air. He could not help being at the studio earlier than usual the next day.

"Mr. Bernardo wants you to go right into the studio, sir," the door attendant said to him as he started to enter the reception room, according to his custom.

Arthur looked keenly at the boy, and a question leaped to his lips, but he had the self-control to suppress it.

"The studio!" he murmured.

"Yes, sir. He's waiting for you."

Again Arthur wanted to ask a question of the boy. He would have given anything to know if Helen were in the studio; but he could not bring himself to ask. So he walked toward the studio, at first briskly, then slowly, and then briskly again.

He had meant to knock loudly at the door of the studio so that he might not surprise the sculptor and his model, if by chance the boy had made a mistake, and Helen was posing; but the door stood open, and he realized by the sudden heaviness of his heart how much he had counted on finding Helen there.

"But maybe she is there," he said to himself, starting on again. "Maybe she is through posing."

He did not believe it possible, however, and was not surprised, on entering the studio, to see only Mr. Bernardo there. The sculptor came forward to meet him contrary to his usual informal way of greeting him unceremoniously.

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Raymond," he said, eyeing him keenly. "I am glad that you, at least, have not left me in the lurch."

"Left you in the lurch!" Arthur repeated quickly. "What do you mean?"

"You did not know, then, that Miss Bertram was not going to pose any more?"

"Not pose any more? Miss Bertram?" gasped Arthur, with a sense of shrinking as one does who anticipates a blow without knowing whence it will come. "Why not? She has not been here to-day, then?"

"No. Instead of coming she sent a note."

Arthur looked at the hand of the sculptor, as if expecting to see the note there. Mr. Bernardo, interpreting the look, indicated his little table at the other end of the studio by a gesture, saying:

"It is there; you shall read it."

Trembling in apprehension of the unknown, Arthur walked in silence by the side of the sculptor to the table, and took the opened letter which the latter handed to him.

Perturbed as he was, he could not help noticing how firm and bold the handwriting was; and, as a lover foolishly will, felt a thrill of pride that even the handwriting became the noble, self-reliant character of the woman.

The sculptor considerately turned away

and busied himself with his group while Arthur read the brief note.

"My dear Mr. Bernardo," it ran, "I know from what you told me yesterday that you can now finish your group without me. I therefore feel the less concern in being obliged to tell you that I shall not be at the studio again. Pardon my abruptness in notifying you of this fact, and please believe that I shall be forever grateful to you for your courtesy and your generosity.

"Will you say good-bye to Mr. Raymond for me, and tell him that I am glad to have had the pleasure of knowing him, and am sorry that I shall never see him again?

"Sincerely yours,

"HELEN BERTRAM."

"Never see me again!" muttered Arthur, in a sort of stupefaction. "Never see me again! My God! What have I done that she should say that?"

"It is rather abrupt, isn't it?" the sculptor said, seeing by a glance at Arthur that he had read the note.

"She has done it to get away from me," Arthur said huskily. "I have annoyed her."

"Nonsense, my dear boy," cried the sculp-

tor heartily, approaching him and taking the letter from him and glancing at it. "Would Helen Bertram say she was glad to have known you, and sorry she was not to see you again, if she had been annoyed by you? If you think so, you don't know the quality of her honesty. No, sir. She meant every word of what she said when she wrote that."

"Then why has she done this?" Arthur asked sadly, intent only on a sense of his unworthiness.

"That is more than I can tell you, but I think you may rest assured that it was from no dislike of you. In fact, to be frank with you, as I may fairly be now that this has happened, she has always been positively enthusiastic about you whenever you have been the subject of conversation, and that has not been seldom, I assure you."

"But I am sure that she has stopped coming in order to avoid meeting me," said Arthur, shaking his head dismally. "You won't deny that?"

"No. I won't deny it. I wish I could. But that is another matter. I don't pretend to understand it, Mr. Raymond, but I am

convinced there is a mystery in her life, an understanding of which would be a solution of her conduct just now."

Mystery is such an ugly word, implying so much that is unpleasant, that Arthur shrank from using it in connection with Helen; particularly now that there was something in her conduct that needed explanation. How could there be a mystery in the life of a pure, noble, high-minded girl of her age?

"Why—why do you think so?" he asked. "It seems so foreign to her nature. You say, yourself, that she is so extremely truthful."

"Oh, please understand," the sculptor said quickly, "that I imply nothing to her discredit. I never met a nobler woman than Helen Bertram; but it is not natural for one of her age to be as reticent about herself as she has always been. Indeed it was contrary to her own nature; for often she would be in the midst of some story about herself, and would seem suddenly to fear that she might be saying too much, and would stop. I am afraid there is some trouble in her life."

"That might be," Arthur cried eagerly. "There may be some relative—her father, a brother—who has brought disgrace on the

name. Oh, if I could only find her! If I could only win her confidence and her love! You must know her address, Mr. Bernardo?"

"Ye-es," was the hesitating answer.

"You will give it to me?" pleaded Arthur. "It is true she refused to tell me where she lived, but I am sure that she cannot find fault with me for going to her now. I would tell her that she need not fear me. I would rather die than do a thing to make her unhappy. You will give me the address, Mr. Bernardo?"

"She particularly asked that you should not know it."

"But you believe that my purpose is honorable, do you not?"

"Be sure I believe that, or I would not have shown you that note."

"And oh! Mr. Bernardo!" Arthur cried with suppressed emotion, "it may be that at this time, more than at any other, she needs a devoted friend. She did not write that note to you lightly; and if you are right, and it was not because she was annoyed with me, then it may be that I can be of service to her."

"You had no suspicion of what was com-

ing from anything she said yesterday? She betrayed no emotion?" demanded the sculptor, who was seeking some excuse for absolving himself of his promise not to tell Helen's address.

"She was kinder than usual," answered Arthur, in a low tone, the recollection of his happiness oppressing him now. "I—I began to hope yesterday."

"It seemed so from your manner. I believed she had given you reason to hope; but I see better now. She knew she was bidding you farewell."

"You will give me her address?" pleaded Arthur.

"If I could only be sure what would be best for her," muttered the sculptor, with a puzzled frown.

"Can I say more than that I love her and would make her my wife?" cried Arthur passionately.

"But if you were to surprise some secret of hers which you have no right to know?"

"I love her! Ah! Mr. Bernardo, do not lose valuable time. How can we know that she does not need me now? Can any secret of hers come to harm when I love her as I

do? Oh, trust me, and give me her address!"

"I see how it is," sighed the sculptor, with an air of resignation, "I shall lose both my models. Oh love! love!"

He hunted in the drawer of the table as he spoke, and presently drew forth a slip of paper on which Helen had written her address. Arthur caught at it eagerly.

"One Hundred and Thirty-fourth street!" he exclaimed. "I will go at once. You will forgive me if I do not pose? I could not!"

"Go by all means, and my best wishes with you."

CHAPTER XIX

For once Arthur did not walk up town; he was in too great haste for that, but almost ran to the elevated station.

The address was that of a neat and modest apartment house, with two small flats on each floor. The name of Mrs. Alicia Bertram was on the letter box belonging to the fourth floor, and Arthur felt his heart begin suddenly to throb as he pressed the electric button belonging to the apartment.

He rang and waited several times, until a feeling of dread began to steal over him, and, in desperation, he pushed the button in and held it there for a considerable length of time. Then, at last, the front door flew open with that click so familiar to those who know flats, and with a sigh of relief Arthur entered the house and mounted the dark and silent stairway.

A woman and a little girl were standing in the hall of the fourth floor, apparently waiting for him, and he began to speculate on what relation they might be to Helen.

"Did you want to see anybody?" the woman said, as he came near the top of the stairs.

"I want to see Miss Bertram."

"She doesn't live here any more," the woman said, eyeing him curiously.

"They moved this morning," the child interjected.

"You keep still!" the woman said imperatively.

"Moved this morning!" repeated Arthur, looking from woman to child. "Then you are not members of the family?"

"We live in here; they lived in there," the woman said briefly, indicating the two doors side by side.

"Do you know where they've moved to?" he asked.

"I guess if they'd wanted you to know they'd have told you," answered the woman with a defiant toss of her head.

"I am a friend of Miss Bertram's," he said, troubled deeply at finding the same sense of mystery pervading Helen's recent home as had been apparent in her conduct.

"He's nicer than that ugly man, isn't he, mamma?" cried the child, whose innocent

eyes had been frankly studying Arthur's face.

"You go inside and stay there," the woman said angrily, pushing the child toward the door.

"Well, he is, anyhow," pouted the little girl, making a slow retreat.

"You are a friend of hers?" Arthur demanded.

"Yes, I am."

"I am, too," he said earnestly. "I would do anything in the world to aid her; indeed I would."

"I don't know anything about that," was the sharp retort; "but I guess she hasn't so many friends that she would slight the least of them. If she wants you to know where she's gone, she'll tell you all right. Excuse me, but I've got work to do."

"Oh! madam!" cried Arthur, "what can I say to win your confidence? Is there nothing that will make you believe that I am Miss Bertram's friend?"

"I guess not. It's none of my business, anyhow. I think maybe Miss Helen doesn't know you're a friend of hers," said the woman sarcastically.

She was moving toward her door, as if to close the interview, when Arthur, at his wits' end for an argument to affect her, burst out with the simple truth with such passionate fervor as to at least arrest the woman's attention.

"Madam," he cried, "I love Miss Bertram. I love her truly, and with all my soul. I do not know what mystery there may be in her life. I do not know what her troubles may be. I confess that she is avoiding me, but I give you my word of honor that I wish for nothing so much as for her welfare. Will you not trust me?"

The woman, impressed by the passion and fervor of his words, turned and faced him, her hands on her hips, her eyes searching his handsome face.

"You look honest," she said, "but that's the worst of it. Lots of men will be honest about everything else, and liars when women are concerned. I can tell you I won't be the one to add a feather's weight to that girl's troubles. If ever there was a good woman she's the one, and I ought to know her, for she's lived here these four months."

"I would die to save her unhappiness,"

Arthur said. "I haven't known her very long, but I've seen her every day for a number of days past, and I have learned to know her so well that I love her as I think man never loved before. If you would tell me where I can find her, I am sure I can convince her that she may trust me."

The woman hesitated for a few minutes, studying Arthur's face the while; then said slowly:

"The fact is that I don't know where she has gone to. She said she would not tell me, so as to be sure no one could surprise it out of me. I guess maybe she knew you'd be hunting her up."

The woman did not mean it as such, but in fact her speech was a compliment to Arthur's noble face. He was not conscious of it, however, for his heart was heavy with the sense of the mystery that deepened about the woman he loved.

"You do not know?" he murmured sadly. "And can you give me no clew?"

"No, I can't, to be honest with you. I did try to find out through the man that drove the truck, but he didn't know himself. She and her mother have been mighty good

to us. Miss Helen sat up with my little girl when she was sick, and Mrs. Bertram made nice things to tempt her to eat when she was getting well, though Miss Helen said nobody ought to be tempted to eat; that when a sick person wanted to eat was time enough. But she was like an angel for goodness. And that's why," she went on, with a flash of indignation in her eyes, "I hate to see her pursued by wicked men."

"I assure you I have only the purest motives in—"

"I didn't mean you," she interrupted. "I meant that other fellow."

"Another man?" Arthur queried, misery clutching his heart.

"I might as well tell you," the woman said. "I can see you're another sort. Yes, there was a man came her to see her three times, so far as I know; all within the last three weeks. Some women would call him handsome, but he was just plain devilish looking to me. One of the tall, dark kind, with black eyes, with such a look in them as to make you wish you weren't a woman when they rested on you. I should have thought she'd have hated him; and I don't know

but she did. Then, again, I don't know that she did. Girls are funny about men, and all tastes are not alike. Good thing, too, I suppose."

"But what about him?" Arthur asked miserably.

"Well, he came here, as I say, three times that I know of."

"Four times," piped up the voice of the little girl, who had evidently been just inside the door.

"You keep still!" cried the woman, but smiled at Arthur, as if to call his attention to the cleverness of the child. "What four times?"

"Once when Miss Helen wasn't home, don't you remember?" shrilled the child, triumphantly emerging into the hall. "Mrs. Bertram was crying, and said she would do all she could, and the man was so cross."

"That's so," cried the woman admiringly. "My goodness! It takes a child to remember things. Mrs. Bertram came to the door with the man the first time he came here, and she seemed all broken up. Afterward the man came when Miss Helen was at home."

"You don't know whether he was anything to her or not?" Arthur said huskily.

The woman stopped suddenly and looked at him anxiously. It was evident that her desire to gossip and her regard for Miss Helen conflicted with each other.

"Say! You know I never meant to tell anybody these things," she exclaimed. "I guess Miss Helen knew I'd be sure to talk all right. Well, anyhow, I don't like that other man a bit; but now I think of it, I shouldn't wonder if you were too late."

"Too late? Why?"

"Well, my goodness!" she cried, her face lighting up with a sudden gleam of intelligence, "I wonder if it was you they meant."

"Please explain what you mean!" he murmured in a sort of despair.

"Why the last time he was here, she let him out, and I heard him say—you know it's easy to hear anything that's said in these here halls?"

"I have no doubt."

"Well, I heard him say in a hard, bitter tone: 'Don't forget that you belong to me, and that I won't give you up to him if one of us dies for it!' I remember his very words."

"That she belonged to him!" murmured Arthur. "And did she make no reply?"

"I didn't hear what she answered. Maybe she didn't say anything. Like as not she didn't, for she was one could hold her tongue when she wanted to. Upon my word, I'm sorry I can't tell you any more."

Arthur's trouble was great. It was possible to think Helen was bound to this unknown rival; it was equally possible to hope that his own star was in the ascendant; but it is the nature of a true lover never to dwell too long on the unpleasant aspect of his own case, and Arthur held to the hope that offered itself but a moment, and dwelt long and miserably on the fear that Helen was bound to another.

"You don't know any more about—about him?" he asked.

"No, I don't; but I'll bet Miss Helen didn't like him. I'll tell you my opinion. I think she lit out of here so suddenly and secretly on his account. Mind you, I don't know, but that's what I think. You see he didn't come often, and he didn't stay long when he did come."

Arthur had a few moments of wretched

indecision, and then made up his mind. Helen might be fleeing from him, or she might be escaping from the persecution of this other man. He would find her and learn the truth. There could be no harm in that.

If she were afraid of him he could quickly make her understand that he was too much her friend to even look at her if it troubled her. If it should happen that there was another man in her life who was annoying her, then she could be made to understand that his—Arthur's—life was at her disposal.

Once his mind was made up he acted with quickness and decision. He had quite forgotten the woman while he stood there turning these thoughts over in his brain. Now he suddenly demanded:

"Can I get into the flat? There may be something in there to give me a clew to where she has gone."

"Maybe there is," the woman cried. "Come on! I've the key. Miss Helen gave it to me the last thing. Hattie, get the key!"

But the precocious little flat dweller had already darted away, and was back again in a moment with the key in her hand. The mother smiled at Arthur in silent approval

of her clever child, and inserted the key in the lock.

The mother and child hastened into the deserted apartments like hounds eager on the scent, but Arthur hesitated on the threshold, his heart throbbing and his imagination suggesting an impropriety in his thus going into Helen's home without her invitation or consent.

But he conquered that feeling by remembering that he meant her nothing but good, and he stepped into the rooms so lately animated by her sweet presence almost holding his breath in a sense of the sacredness of the place.

"This was her room, mister!" the shrill treble of the child informed him from a little room to his left hand.

He stopped, shrinking from entering her room, as if that surely was a place it would be profanation for him to enter; but the child, whose imagination was not affected by love, screamed out in exultation:

"Here's a picture! and it's his'n, I'll betcher."

A feeling that all this was like spying on Helen revolted his sensibilities, and he deter-

mined to put an end to it as quickly as possible.

He strode into the room, and came upon the mother and child eagerly studying a bit of a torn photograph. He took it from their hands and looked at it; it was the upper part, and showed only the face above the brows, really revealing nothing of the person's distinguishing features.

"It's him, all right," the woman said. "He was bigger than you; taller and broader; and he was dark. Some folks would call him handsome."

"Will you see if there's anything like an address in any of the other rooms?" Arthur said, taking the torn piece of photograph and thrusting it into his pocket. He wanted to get them out of that room. It seemed to him that they desecrated it. He longed to be alone in there with the memories Helen had left.

When they were gone he drew a long breath and looked slowly about. In an instant he had pounced upon an object lying on the floor with the avidity of a miser finding a glittering coin of gold. But in this case it was nothing more precious than a soft suede

glove, left behind because it had lost its fellow, perhaps, or because it had been overlooked.

Arthur pressed it to his lips, recognizing it as one he had seen Helen wear. Then he thrust it carefully into an inner pocket and walked guiltily out of the room.

They found nothing in any of the rooms that could give them any idea of where the occupants had moved to, though the woman and child picked up every scrap of paper they saw and examined everything else carefully.

"There isn't much here, anyhow," the woman said at last. "They were awfully clean folks. As for Miss Helen—my goodness! I think she must ha' nearly worn the bath-tub into holes with her bathing. You know you can hear through these partitions just as easy."

"I don't think it's worth while to hunt any more," said Arthur, anxious to keep the woman from gossiping. "I'm very much obliged to you for coming in with me."

"Oh, that's all right," answered the woman as voluble now as she had been disposed to be reticent at first. "I had nothing else to do. Besides, I'd promised Miss Helen I'd come in and clean up after she was gone.

You know there always will be a little muss left when folks move—the cleanest of them; and I guess there never were any cleaner than the Bertrams."

"I'm greatly obliged to you, anyhow," Arthur said, putting a silver coin into the hand of the little girl; "and if I may, I'll come again to find out if you've heard anything about them."

"Say thank you to the gentleman," exclaimed the mother to the child, and then with a smile at Arthur, "children have to learn manners, I think. I never did know one that had them naturally. Yes, I'll be glad to see you any time. When I clean up here I may come across something, you know. Of course Miss Helen paid me to clean up," she added as the thought struck her that Arthur might not understand.

"Here is my card," he said, "in case you should have occasion to send me any word. Of course I will be glad to pay for any expense or trouble you are put to."

"Oh, well," she answered earnestly, "as long as you're a friend of Miss Bertram's I'll do anything. I only hope you'll get her; that's all. Good day! Oh, I say, did you

think of trying to find the truckman that took her things?"

"How can I do that?" he demanded eagerly.

"Well, I don't know, unless you go to the nearest stand. There's a big stable over on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth or Twenty-sixth street, near Third avenue. You might go there."

"Thank you!" he cried gratefully, "I will."

It seemed so valuable a suggestion that he hurried down through the dark halls, in which the gas had not yet been lighted, and out into the street. He stood for a moment on the sidewalk in front of the house, undecided which way to go, when around the nearest corner there came a tall man, walking rapidly.

In an instant it flashed through his brain that this was the other man who stood so near to Helen that he could claim her for his. He turned full about so as to face him, and there was instant recognition on both sides.

It was Charles Morgan who approached.

CHAPTER XX

It was appalling and it was incredible to Arthur that Charles Morgan could be the man who belonged in Helen's life; but there was no time then to study the matter; for Morgan, after a sudden start at the sight of Arthur, had continued to approach.

Arthur neither spoke nor moved, and Morgan, after that first movement, came toward him with no alteration of pace, but with a face distorted by an expression of hatred so malignant that it was actually satanic.

He passed so close to Arthur that his shoulder brushed the latter's coat. Their eyes met and exchanged messages which it would have been difficult to translate into words.

But Morgan did not turn into the house from which Arthur had just emerged. He passed on, leaving with Arthur nothing more than a consciousness of a hatred implacable and undying.

"Is it an accident that he is here?" Arthur asked himself, as his eyes followed the tall,

stalwart figure rapidly being lost in the early twilight of a winter's day.

He drew the piece of torn photograph from his pocket and tried to study it in the dim light; and when that proved futile, he tried to recall for comparison the hair and forehead of Morgan and those in the photograph.

"How can it be? How can it be?" he murmured to himself in misery. "What has such as he to do in the life of a woman like Helen Bertram? Besides," he thought, with a sense of reassurance, "if she had known him she would have told me, since she was fully aware of a part, at least, of my relation toward him."

Satisfying himself with this thought, he turned away from the house and set out to prosecute his inquiries regarding the truckman who had taken the furniture for Helen and her mother.

Hardly had he turned the corner of the street when at the other end of the block the tall figure of Charles Morgan came stealthily into view. He had, in fact, been watching the man he so hated; and, now that he was out of sight, came swiftly toward the house from which Arthur had just come.

His movements were almost a repetition of Arthur's. He pushed the electric button of the flat in which the Bertrams had been living several times until at last the door was opened.

"Curse them!" he muttered savagely, as he entered the house, "did they know I was here?"

The gas was lighted in the top hall by the time he reached there, and the woman and her child were standing there to greet him just as they had been in Arthur's case.

"Ho!" cried the woman triumphantly, as she recognized him, "you're too late. She's gone!"

But Morgan, taken aback and surprised as he undoubtedly was, had not been educated in the shifty practice of the criminal lawyer to lose his presence of mind even at such an unexpected rebuff as this.

"She's gone!" he repeated, his black eyes searching her face. "Who's gone? What do you mean?"

"I mean Miss Helen's gone; that's what I mean."

A part, at least, of the truth flashed instantly into Morgan's mind, and, suppressing

the savage oath that leaped to his lips, he cried out so naturally as to quite deceive the woman:

"Gone? Of course she's gone; nobody knows that better than I do. That's what I came to see you about."

"Well, you can't get anything out of me, I can tell you."

Morgan laughed with very well simulated amusement.

"I know I couldn't if I wanted to; Helen told me you were too good a friend of hers to betray her willingly; but I don't want to get anything out of you. I only want to make sure you won't let anybody else trick you into telling where Helen has gone."

"Where she's gone? Not very likely to, I guess, since I don't know myself. I wonder Miss Helen didn't tell you that."

"It wasn't necessary," he said indifferently, though secretly cursing the woman for her shrewdness. "What she was afraid of was that you might unintentionally say something to put her enemy on her track."

"Her enemy!" repeated the woman, with a little laugh. "I wonder what he looks like. He isn't a tall, dark man, is he?"

"You might describe him that way," he answered, with every appearance of not comprehending her very plain allusion to his own personal appearance, "but he isn't as dark as I am, nearly. The fact is, however," he went on, with all the theatrical impressiveness he had learned to use in addressing juries, "she wanted me to beg you to simply refuse to talk to anybody about her. She does not know, I don't know, that the man she fears will know that she ever lived here, but he may discover it, and he is so clever that he may worm something out of you that you may not think is of any consequence."

"If I don't know anything how can I say anything?" the woman cried sharply, her face betraying a certain perturbation; for now that Arthur was gone and Morgan was there speaking in a quiet tone of authority, she began to feel misgivings.

"That is true, of course," Morgan said, shrugging his shoulders as if he realized that there was no more to say on that subject. "But I suppose Helen felt so nervous about this man that she couldn't help sending me to ask you to please be careful. By the way! I might as well give you a little description of

the man in case he should come. He's not as tall as I am, and not so dark. He has brown eyes, and everybody calls him a very handsome man. He's an actor, and can put on any kind of look to suit the occasion."

"It's all very well telling me to look out for him," the woman said nervously, "but how do I know it's not you I'm to look out for? I don't know who you are."

"That's true enough," he answered good-naturedly; "for all you know I may be Helen's worst enemy. But whether I am or not won't matter in this case, for I'm not asking any questions of you, and all I am asking you to do is not to say anything about Miss Bertram to anyone. You will admit that there can't be anything wrong in that?"

"No, I s'pose not," she replied uneasily; and then snapped sharply to the little girl: "Do stop pulling my dress!"

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed the child, who had been unusually silent up to this moment, "maybe that was a bad man."

"You hush, or I'll send you inside!"

The opportunity Morgan had been waiting for had come. He pretended to give a start of extreme surprise, and cried out sternly:

"Is it possible that fellow Raymond has been here, and that you have betrayed something to him? Oh, madam! madam!"

"I didn't know anything about him. He didn't get much out of me, anyhow."

"Merciful heaven! poor Helen! poor Helen!" he cried tragically, as if plunged into the deepest grief by the circumstance. "Alas! what shall I do now? Is it possible that you have discovered Helen's hiding place and have let her enemy know it?"

"No such thing," answered the alarmed woman, becoming at last a facile instrument for the clever and unscrupulous lawyer to play upon: "I only told him he might go to the stables on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth or Sixth street to see if he could find the truckman that took her furniture."

"How long ago was that?"

"Just now. Why, you might almost have met him on the stairs."

"Then if I hurry I may head him off. You are sure he could have learned nothing else?"

"I let him into the flat, and he saw the upper part of a photograph that had been torn; a photograph of you, I do believe it was."

"There was nothing else?" he demanded, giving her no time for reflection.

"Nothing. Oh, I hope I haven't done anything—"

"I hope not, but I don't know. I'll hurry after him. Oh, if he comes again be sure to say nothing of my visit, or you may do worse harm."

"I won't, indeed I won't!" the woman cried.

Morgan had accomplished as much as he could hope to, and made all haste away from the house, eager to carry out a terrible thought that had been suggested to him by his evil brain.

"Curse him!" he muttered as he strode swiftly down the street, "does he think he can take Helen from me as he did Amelia? He will discover before he is through with me that he had better never to have crossed my path."

Arthur was indeed to discover that no man ever had a more subtle, dangerous or unscrupulous enemy than he had in Charles Morgan.

The latter, who knew the neighborhood better than Arthur, was perfectly well aware

that the stables to which the woman had alluded were in One Hundred and Twenty-sixth street; but instead of going to them, as he had made her believe he would, he went with all possible speed to a house on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street, passed through a liquor saloon into a back room, and there tapped at a side door in a peculiar way.

A sliding panel opened in the door on a level with his face, and he was studied for a moment by a pair of keen eyes on the other side.

"It's all right, Billy," Morgan said familiarly.

The door was instantly opened, and Morgan glided through the opening. A stairway led to the upper floor, though it needed one familiar with the place to find it as readily in the pitchy darkness as he did. Up the stairs he leaped rapidly, and at the top came to a door, on which he again knocked in a peculiar manner.

As at the first door, he was admitted only after scrutiny, but evidently he had now passed all the barriers, and was at the end of his journey, for he was in a luxuriously fur-

nished room, occupied at the moment by only half a dozen men, but plainly enough arranged for purposes of gambling.

"Hello, Charlie!" was the friendly greeting he received.

"Hello!" was his preoccupied response. "Where's Red Connor?"

"Here I am, Charlie; what do you want? Got another lamb to be shorn?"

There was a general low laugh at the speaker's words as he came leisurely forward from a corner of the room where he had not been visible to Morgan. He was a sharp-faced man, with sandy hair, small, restless hazel eyes, and a wiry frame. His speech was the least bit drawling, but his manner was alert, and marked by a certain aggressiveness, which, taken with his fastidiously clothed person, might easily impress the casual observer with the idea that he was a gentleman.

"Come into the other room!" said Morgan, sharply, leading the way into the front room, which was separated from the other by portieres.

"Nothing wrong?" queried the gambler.

"No; but I want you to do a piece of work for me right away."

"Oh, go on!" the other drawled.

"You know Murphy's stables?"

"On Twenty-sixth? Yes."

"A man by the name of Arthur Raymond has just been there—may be there now—to ask about a truck that took some furniture for a lady on One-thirty-fifth this morning. He's after the address of the new house. Did he get the address? What about him, anyhow? Find out all you can. Hurry!"

"What sort of looker?" demanded the gambler, imperturbably.

"Tall, brown-eyed, handsome, powerful."

The gambler stood a moment in reflection, then left the room without a word more to anyone, even as he passed through the other apartment.

It might have been something more than half an hour that Morgan waited for the return of his emissary, and during all that time he paced the room a prey to bitter, hateful thoughts. Nor was he disturbed by the intrusion of any of those in the other room, an evidence of his importance in the place.

He turned and stood facing the other room, when finally the sound of the opening of the

door fell on his ears; and when the imperturbable gambler entered through the portieres his black eyes eagerly questioned him.

"Dead easy," said the gambler. "He'd only just gone, taking with him the information that the truck was stabled there, but that the driver was out then. That he could be seen before daylight in the morning, or in the evening about seven. Your man will call again to-morrow night."

Morgan's dark face lighted up and a horrible oath leaped from his lips as he ejaculated his approval of the other.

"You always get there," he said.

"I mean to," was the drawling response.

"Now there's another thing, a little uglier, to do, but I want it done," said Morgan.

"Well?"

"When that man Raymond goes to the stable to-morrow night I want him done up."

"Killed?"

"No. I only want him spoiled a little. Can't you get some of the outside gang to decoy him into some quiet place and spoil his good looks? They may have his watch and money, too."

"How much spoiled?"

"Break his nose or his jaw; anything to rob him of his good looks!" was the answer, with the savage ferocity of a wild beast, "but don't finish him, for I am saving him for worse than that. Curse him! How I hate him!"

"And what do I get out of it?" asked the gambler, calmly.

"You may pluck the pigeon bare to-night, and keep all you get. I'll see that he comes here."

The gambler half closed his ferret-like eyes and studied Morgan in silence for a few moments, but presently smiled knowingly as he drawled:

"I begin to see, Charlie; this man Raymond is Arnold's employer. Deep, Charlie! Deep!"

"What makes you think that?" Morgan demanded angrily.

"Oh," drawled the other, "figures are in my line, and occasionally I put two and two together. I heard you and him talking about Raymond the other night."

An oath broke from Morgan's lips, and there was more of threatening in his manner than in his words as he hissed fiercely:

"Curse you, Connor! I don't like to be spied on. Play your own game, and let me play mine."

The gambler looked at him very calmly, drawling:

"Play your own game as much as you want to, Charlie, but don't think you can draw me into it, and then play me for a fool. I generally know what I'm doing. I can be dumb, but I won't be blind. I can see that you're playing for a big stake, and I'm not going to do your dirty work for a few hundred while you, maybe, salt away the thousands."

"Perhaps you forget," snarled Morgan, "that if it wasn't for me you'd be doing time in Sing Sing."

"If both of us got our desserts from the law," the other retorted coolly, "both of us would be doing time—and a lot of it. As for what you've done for me, why I'd be rotting behind the bars now if I hadn't been useful to you. So don't talk sentiment to me. Play fair with me and I'll play fair with you."

"What do you want?" snarled Morgan.

"I want to be let in on the ground floor. How much is there in this deal?"

"I don't know myself, but I expect to find out to-night."

"Well, do I come into the game?"

"What are your terms?"

"One-third. That gives you one-third for your share and one-third for your brains."

"And you'll see that Raymond is done up to-morrow night?"

"Sure."

"Don't make the mistake of thinking him too easy, for he's a very tough proposition."

"So is a piece of lead pipe. Does one-third go?"

"Yes, it goes," Morgan answered sullenly; then added, as if he had made up his mind to accept the terms gracefully, "and I don't mind saying your third ought to be worth ten thousand."

"That's talking."

CHAPTER XXI

It is a fortunate thing that premonition of impending evil is very rare, if not absolutely non-existent; for what would life be if the future were dark with the brooding of undefined terrors?

Certainly Arthur was better off for guessing nothing of the foul plot that was being hatched against him. He went home, troubled indeed, but only by the thoughts of Helen Bertram, which the events of the afternoon had rendered inevitable.

At the outset he had taken counsel only of his passionate love for Helen, and had hastened to her house; now, full of the disappointment of not finding her, depressed by the knowledge of the mystery in her life, and disturbed more, even, than he realized by the phantom of Charles Morgan which had passed so ominously between him and the woman he loved, he strode through the streets so absorbed in his painful thoughts that he could not have been more alone if he had been in the midst of a desert waste.

On reaching home, however, he was wrenched out of himself by the information imparted by Margie that his brother Robert was violent, and that his father was too weak to cope with him.

Asking Herbert to assist him, he hurried to the room which served for the confinement of the poor wretch, and there found him straining at his chains and emitting those dreadful, inarticulate sounds common to those in his condition.

Heartsick at the necessity, Arthur and Herbert grappled with the maniac and put upon him a straight-jacket kept for the purpose; but as they finally left the room, Arthur cried out:

"It is barbarous, Herbert. There must be a better way than this. Besides, this is not life, but the degradation of it! Oh, if father would let me try the experiment of the natural method of cure for poor Robert!"

"You would try it yourself, Arthur?" Herbert asked in surprise.

"No! Oh no! But I have been seeking the right man for some time, and I have discovered one who keeps a sanitarium up the Hudson River, who thinks it possible to cure

Robert, though he can give no opinion until he has seen him."

"Have you spoken to your father about it?"

"I have, but Dr. Brayton has convinced him that nothing is possible in the way of cure, and I have no right to take a step without father's consent."

"It is true, but alas! that you cannot prevail upon him to at least listen to the doctor you have found. Is he a doctor, by the way?"

"Yes, he is a highly educated regular physician, but he practices the natural method altogether. I would urge father more insistently if it were not that he is so far from well himself. Oh, why have I not the eloquence to convince my own parents and my sister of the folly of the old way? There is Maude going to the hospital to-morrow to be operated on, to be ruined for life, and nothing I can say is of any avail!"

"Why not make one more effort after dinner, Arthur? Margie has been talking to Maude to-day, and it may be that something you might say would turn her from her purpose; for it can't be that she

likes the thought of the ordeal she is to undergo."

Dinner could not be otherwise than a dull, almost mournful meal in the Raymond household that evening, for of all who sat down to it only Margie and her husband were free from preoccupation of a painful nature; while they, happy to overflowing in their well-rounded lives, felt the weight of sadness that rested on the others.

But they soon escaped to their own room, where baby Gertrude awaited them, and where all was joy and peace and contentment; while Arthur, glancing from the drawn face of his father and the troubled, anxious one of his mother, to where Maude sat, wondered why it was that when he carried to them a message of hope, they refused to accept it.

"Do you go to the hospital to-morrow, Maudie?" he asked tenderly.

"Yes, I do, but I don't want to talk about it. The surgeon said I was not to be worried or troubled about anything."

"I don't want to trouble you, dear," he answered, "but I have been thinking that it was natural enough that you should not give

much weight to my opinion, and that I ought to have it backed up by some good doctor's."

"Excuse me if I go to my room, Arthur," Maude said, rising and going to the door. "It is useless to open a discussion that can do no good."

Arthur saw the door close on his sister, and felt utterly helpless. He turned to his mother with a cry of despair.

"Mother," he said, "won't you do something? Call in a good, disinterested physician, and have his opinion."

"Why, Arthur," she answered, "I didn't suppose you believed there was such a thing as a good, disinterested physician. I am sure I gained the impression that you believed all doctors humbugs."

"I never have believed or said such a thing," he cried earnestly. "I consider the profession of healing as one of the noblest in the world, and I know well that there are many physicians who take a high and serious view of their work. My complaint is against those who enter the profession of medicine without any other purpose than to make an easy and respectable living; who only study enough to pass their examinations and get

their diplomas; and who neither study afterward, nor really think at any time. They practice by formula, and prescribe on the hit-or-miss plan."

"I am sure I am glad to know that you don't condemn all doctors," his mother said.

"I am so far from condemning them that I even am prepared to say that I believe the medical profession holds within its ranks some of the noblest, truest men living."

He rose and went to the door, seeing that it would only distress his parents to urge them to interfere to save Maude from the terrible knife. The subject must be abandoned, and Maude must suffer. Alas! that it was so.

The servant handed him a letter as he left the room, saying it had just been brought to the house. He went up to the sitting-room to read it, and on reaching there carelessly looked at the address. He recognized the handwriting at once, and uttered a little cry of dismay. The letter was from Amelia.

Not two months had passed since Amelia had given him back his ring, but it seemed to him as if an age had elapsed since that distressing episode. The coming of Helen into

his life had so dwarfed the figure of Amelia that this reminder of her gave him a painful start by the sudden recall of the importance she had once been to him.

He wondered what she could have to say to him, and prolonged the opening of the letter. If it had been from Helen he would have torn the envelope open; now he slowly took out his knife and carefully cut the end. Then he sighed, and drew the letter out of the envelope.

The faint odor of violets that hung about the paper brought back to him Amelia's love of those flowers; and the sight of her pretty, round handwriting recalled the many affectionate words she had put on paper for his happiness.

He sank sadly enough into a chair, the unread letter in hand, and the questioning thoughts came: Was he fickle in love? Had he ever really loved Amelia? Was it love he felt for Helen? How could he be sure that he would not turn from her as he had turned from Amelia?

He did not put the questions away from him unanswered, as a weaker man would have done, but faced them all manfully. He

could not, and did not, blame himself for what had taken place between him and Amelia, but if inconstancy were a characteristic of his, then while there was time he would cry halt to his heart, and, let the pain be what it might, he would spare Helen any possibility of unhappiness by withdrawing from his pursuit of her.

"But I do love Amelia now," he murmured, answering his own questions. "I love her as well as ever I did. If I had married her, even had she been well, it would have been a terrible mistake, for there was between us none of that physical drawing which so many call passion, thinking to debase it. When I was in Amelia's presence I felt nothing of that; when I am with Helen I throb and thrill. If that were all, I should feel that it was the animal in me alone that was moved, but it is only a part. Besides that there is spiritual exaltation. If I feel the sweet thrill of passion, without which marriage would be a farce and an unholy mockery, I also experience the spiritual and moral exaltation which comes from the contact with a nature attuned to and complementing my own."

He had never analyzed his feelings in just

this way before, and he did so now with a distinct sense of relief. He felt more at peace with himself, knowing that whatever pain Amelia might have suffered, she, at least, was infinitely better off than she could have been in becoming his wife.

"What if I had married her and met Helen afterward?" he asked himself.

The horror of the question was a sufficient answer to itself, as well as to any doubts of his constancy that had insinuated themselves in his brain. He unfolded the letter and read it:

"Dear Arthur: I want you to come and see me as one friend visits another. Because we are no longer in the relation of lovers is no reason why we should cease to be friends. I know as well as you now that we ought not have been lovers at all, but should have remained the friends we have been all our lives. How much harm is done us by the ignorance in which we are lovingly kept by those who should enlighten us! I know a lot more than I did; really I do. I was such a little ignoramus I wonder you had any patience with me at all.

"Do come in just as soon as you can, if only to see what even a short time of rational

dressing and living can do. Can you imagine this little butterfly of an Amelia without corsets? Oh yes, I dare to say that improper word right out loud—CORSETS! And two meals a day! Honest! No meat—not even a shred! Windows wide open at night! A physical culture girl? I guess I am. Poor papa! How he would like his third meal again! But no, I am firm; I am determined that he shall have no more indigestion. I am only sorry he doesn't wear corsets so I could make him take them off. I am just as crazy as you were to reform everybody. Papa says I'm a Mugwump, but I don't know about that; I'm afraid a Mugwump isn't something nice. Is it?

"Now, be sure you come. I want to know about this girl you are in love with. You see I know all about it. I went to Margie, and got it all out of her.

"Affectionately, your little friend,

"AMELIA."

"God bless the little woman!" Arthur exclaimed, starting to his feet as he read the last word. "What a heart of gold she has!"

Within five minutes he was in the parlor of the Winsted house; and a very few minutes later there was a swift patter of little feet on

the stairs, followed by the appearance of Amelia.

He took a step toward her, but she ran smilingly toward him with both hands outstretched, so much like the merry, sprightly Amelia of the days before aches and pains were known to her, that he could not suppress the wondering cry of "Why, Amelia!" as he took the two little hands in his.

"I am so glad to see you again, you naughty boy!" she cried frankly, putting him quite at his ease at once. "This is so much better than hiding behind curtains to get a look at you. Sit down! No! Look at me first! Short skirt, red cheeks, bright eyes, big waist. Am I improved?"

"You are like yourself. It would be hard to improve on that."

"Good. You may go up ahead for that; and sit down, too."

"But indeed you are even better to look at than ever you were," Arthur said, conscious, in a most delightful way, of a perfect brotherliness toward her; "and are you feeling better?"

"Why, I am almost well. Of course, I can't walk as Margie can, but I do pretty

well. Oh dear! I have tried so hard to coax Maude to try our way. Do you notice that I call it our way? Wasn't it horrid of me, the way I acted when you tried to advise me?"

"Why, you wanted to be convinced, I suppose, and I went at it in a clumsy fashion that repelled you."

"No; it wasn't that," she said, "I was horrid; but it was a good thing, too. If it hadn't been for that we would have been married, and then there would have been unhappiness. Yes, Arthur, I'm going to talk about it and get rid of it. I know now, as well as you, that I didn't love you in the right way any more than you did me. We loved like real good friends, and that was all; and now we may go on loving in the same way, mayn't we?"

"I shall be so glad to have you for a friend, Amelia. I can't tell you how unhappy I have been over it."

"And haven't I, though? At first, after I was so horrid, I repented, and used to hide behind the curtains to watch for you; and I thought my heart was broken. I wished every day that you would come back to me. Then I took to curing myself in the sensible

way—your way, you know. And I began to look into all sorts of things that I had been ignorant about—myself, for example; and you can't guess how much I learned. Anyhow, I learned that friendship isn't enough to marry on. Now I'm as glad as you that the engagement was broken. Do tell me what her name is!" she interjected abruptly.

Arthur blushed and laughed together, but Amelia had put him into such good spirits, with her arch, merry ways, that he answered without a moment of hesitation:

"Helen Bertram."

"What a lovely name! And she is beautiful, of course?"

"The most beautiful—" He stopped in confusion. Amelia laughed gaily, exclaiming:

"Go on! I don't mind. But do you love her very much?" And the laughing face grew suddenly serious.

"Very, very much."

"Ah yes," she said sympathetically, and leaned over and stroked his hand gently, "it is easy to see that you do. You are not making any mistake this time, Arthur. And she? Does she love you in the same way?"

"I don't know that she cares anything at all for me," he answered, his face falling.

"Oh my!" Amelia murmured, her sweet face betraying her concern. "I didn't mean to be indiscreet. I wouldn't have been so free if I had known."

"You haven't been indiscreet," he cried eagerly. "If you would care to hear about it I shall be glad to tell you. Somehow I couldn't tell Margie; but you and I have been confidants so many years that it seems easy to tell you."

"I shall be so glad to have you. Is she little like me? Or is she big?"

"Neither. She is—"

"Just right. I know," laughingly interposed Amelia. "Oh, Arthur, you just are in love, and I'm so glad. Now go on!"

And Arthur poured his story into the sympathetic ears of the honest, earnest little woman who had had the courage to convert a failure in love into a success in friendship.

CHAPTER XXII

It was not only a comfort, but equally a benefit to Arthur to be able to express himself fully concerning his love for Helen Bertram. He thereby formulated many thoughts which had been lying in half obscurity before, and, too, Amelia's questions brought new light to bear on old thoughts.

Helen's reticence and the mystery in her life troubled Amelia greatly, for she could not comprehend them. Her own life was so open and frank that it was hard for her to reconcile mystery with perfect purity and innocence. But after hearing all Arthur could tell her of Helen, she summed up her thoughts in a few sweet, womanly words:

"I wish there was not the mystery, Arthur," she said, "but I know I am not a proper judge, since my life has been an easy one. Helen's has been one of trial, it is very evident. She has had to earn her living, and she has been poor. I have been shielded from all the enemies which make an unprotected

girl's life so hard to endure. You have talked with her, and your own honest nature has judged hers. I trust your impressions, your judgment."

"And what do you think I ought to do about seeking for her?"

Amelia smiled as she answered with a charming frankness:

"Well, you know, it is a compliment to her that you want to see her so much that you are willing to take any trouble to find her. If she does care for you she will be glad to have you find her; and if she doesn't care for you, you will be none the worse off for having found her."

"And what do you think of Charles Morgan?"

"I don't want to think of him at all, for I shudder every time I do. I remember with shame that I almost yielded to him that time he asked me to marry him. Maybe Miss Bertram knows him just about as I did; only she is wiser than I, and knows enough to drive him away from her. If I were you, I'd ask her the plain question when you find her."

When Arthur finally left Amelia he felt as

if the situation had been greatly cleared up; and the next day he was enabled to better endure the suspense of waiting, and was no longer haunted by the fear that he perhaps ought not persist in hunting for Helen.

He threw himself into the work of the office with an energy that accomplished marvels, and also helped to carry him through the time until he went to the studio.

He had hoped that the sculptor might have learned something in the meantime, but the instant question of Mr. Bernardo deprived him of that hope.

"Did you discover anything?" the latter asked eagerly.

Arthur explained how he had found the apartment vacated, and told what he had done and intended yet to do in order to find Helen.

"Ah!" cried the sculptor, after listening to the end, "I do not understand it; I am fearful for that splendid girl. She is not one to run from a mere phantom. It is not you, Mr. Raymond, but that other man. There is villainy in this, you may be sure. She is the personification of innocence and purity. I would stake my reputation on that."

"Oh, surely!" cried Arthur, showing that no doubt had entered his brain.

"You must find her to help her, Mr. Raymond. She is young, she is magnificently beautiful; she is a victim. I can see it as if I knew everything."

These things were easy for the sculptor to say, and quite as easy for Arthur to believe, but they did nothing to make the situation any clearer; and to ring all the possible changes on the subject got them no nearer to a solution.

But the more he thought on the matter the more confirmed Arthur was in his determination to prosecute the search for Helen. He reasoned that Helen might not love him, indeed, but that she might need the help of a devoted friend.

Dinner that evening was a gloomy affair, owing to the fact that Maude had left home for the hospital. Nothing was said on the subject, but the ghastly thought of the pending operation was present in every mind, unconsciously, with them all, affecting their conversation.

So it was a distinct relief to Arthur to exchange the atmosphere of depression for one

of energetic action. He left the house as soon as possible, and shortly before seven o'clock entered the stables on One Hundred and Twenty-sixth street.

"Is the driver I was looking for here?" he asked.

"Very sorry, sir," answered the man in charge, giving Arthur an odd look, "but the man very unexpectedly threw up his job and has gone out of town. I don't even know where he's gone, but I'll try to find out, if you like."

Arthur frowned, and a suspicion entered his mind that he was not being fairly and openly dealt with; but when he questioned the man sharply, and was answered in a perfectly frank way, he could do nothing but accept the situation. He promised to reward the man if he would bring him into communication with the truck driver, and then reluctantly left the stables.

He walked up the block, and had turned the corner, having determined to go to the flat again, when the sound of quick footsteps behind him was followed by an exclamation evidently addressed to him.

"Sa-ay, mister!"

"Did you want me?" he asked, turning around and examining the speaker.

"Was you lookin' fer Pat Glancey, the truck driver?" the other demanded.

"Yes. What do you know about him?"

"I know where he is all right," was the answer. "Them stiffs at the stable wouldn't put you on to where he was because he pulled out o' their stable this mornin', see? But he's a friend o' mine, see? and I'll show you where he lives if you like."

"Indeed I shall be very much obliged to you," Arthur answered eagerly. "Will you take me to him now?"

"Sure! Come on!"

Arthur followed him without a moment's hesitation. It did not occur to him to be suspicious, although he naturally studied the man as well as he could as they went along.

His guide was a young man, certainly not over twenty-two or three, shabbily dressed, and with a certain swaggering air that was not reassuring, but which, in fact, caused Arthur to say instinctively:

"How did you happen to know I was looking for Glancey?"

"I was hangin' around the stable. I ain't

got no steady job, an' I puts in me time there, takin' me chances."

"Oh!" said Arthur, satisfied with the explanation, and at the same time struck by the thought that something more than friendship for the truck driver was involved in the young man's conduct. "Let me give you a dollar for your trouble."

He drew a roll of bills from his pocket as he spoke, and, unconscious of the greedy, glittering eyes of his companion fixed hungrily on the money, pulled a dollar bill from the roll and gave it to him.

"Thank you, sir," the fellow said, thrusting the bill into his pocket and starting forward again.

Arthur took no especial note of the streets through which he was led, for he was so familiar with the city in general that he unconsciously assumed that he would know where he was when their destination was reached.

He did feel a sense of surprise, mingled with a touch of dismay, when his guide turned into a street which had the appearance, on that block, of being deserted.

On either side of the street there were rows

of houses, but the heaps in front of them told the story of their unfinished state; and even in the darkness, but faintly illumined by a distant electric light, it was easy to see that the houses were destined to the class known as cheap tenements.

"Is it near here?" Arthur asked, breaking a rather long silence.

"Yep; it's on this block. His cousin's a kind of night watchman, an' some o' the rooms is finished so's they can live in 'em."

If Arthur had been at all suspicious he would certain have noted that the young man spoke jerkily, and in a nervous way, as if repeating a lesson he had not perfectly learned; but the explanation seemed sufficient to Arthur, and he followed again without a word.

When the young man, after going slowly and carefully down the block, studying the houses as he went, finally stopped in front of one a short distance beyond the middle of the row, Arthur said in surprise:

"It can't be here. This house is no further along than the others. Are you sure you've made no mistake?"

"That's all right, mister," was the re-

sponse, in a tone of growing surliness. "I ain't makin' no mistake. The room is on the back. This is the house. Come on in!"

The uneasiness Arthur felt was altogether too vague to have any influence on him; so, after a moment of instinctive hesitation he followed the young man into the house by the lower door.

He was struck at once by the odor of damp plaster, a proof that notwithstanding the lowness of the temperature the masons were still at work on the houses; and he knew too much about building operations to believe that the house could be made habitable at such a stage of its existence in a cold winter month.

"Nobody could live in this house," he said sharply, "you must be mistaken. I don't hear anybody, and there isn't a sign of a light."

"That's all right, mister," was the answer, "you'll hear somebody soon enough, and there'll be lights."

Something in the tone, something in the general situation, brought Arthur to an undefined but strong sense of danger, and he stopped short in the narrow hallway.

"I think I'll wait outside," he said decisively. "Bring Glancey outside!"

"Wait a minute!" the fellow said quickly, and then raised his voice to a louder tone and called: "Hello, Pat!"

There was no answer, but Arthur, all alert now, heard faint footsteps and the soft rustling of clothing, as if more than one person was steadily approaching him from behind.

"Who's there?" he cried sharply, facing about.

Instantly the silence was complete, and he was no longer aware of even his guide's presence. And now, at last, the thought of treachery flashed into his brain, and he was preparing himself to meet it, when a sudden flood of light flashed into his eyes, followed by swift footsteps approaching him from behind, and then a blow upon the head that sent him reeling, half unconscious, against the wall.

CHAPTER XXIII

An ordinary man must certainly have succumbed at once if he had found himself in the situation of Arthur; but he, trained to receive blows and to measure their effects, was no sooner struck than he was on guard with all his wit and strength and cool courage.

He staggered against the damp, freshly-plastered wall, his head ringing from the blow that had fallen on it; but half-dazed as he was, he acted on the experience of many a hard sparring bout and sought, first of all, to regain his full consciousness.

He realized that the blow that had fallen had been dealt from behind him, and he knew that as long as the light of the dark lantern illumined him he was at the mercy of his assailant.

Instantly he threw himself at the light, striking out with short arm blows in the hope of intimidating if not hitting the man who held it; and that his object was partly attained was evidenced by the wavering of the

light, and by the man's oaths and cries for his companions to "down him."

In such fine physical condition as Arthur was, it was only a matter of moments for him to recover himself; and before those behind could follow up their first blow, he had grappled with the man who held the light, and had with ease swung him around in the narrow hall, so as to interpose his body as a shield between him and the others.

The man struggled helplessly in Arthur's iron grasp, at the same time letting the dark lantern fall to the floor and yelling hoarsely to his companions not to hit him.

Arthur's training had taught him the value of swift and sudden action at the moment when his antagonist was least on guard; so now, being in full possession of his wits, and quite recovered from the blow he had received, he rushed his prisoner before him, shaking him violently and thrusting him forward at those who stood in the narrow passage.

How many might be there opposed to him he did not know, but neither did he know how soon others might attack him from behind. The door out of the house was in

front of him, and he wished to get to it as soon as possible.

Almost in an instant he felt the shock of the encounter with the men in front, but the groans and gasping cries of the fellow he was using as a sort of battering ram evidently confused the ruffians and gave Arthur his opporunity.

He released the man he had captured and struck out right and left over his shoulders. Both blows landed and further confused the men, who seemed unable to realize the force and activity they had roused.

Again Arthur grappled with the first man, and again he used him against his companions.

There were a few moments of confusion, Arthur pushing his man with one hand and striking with the other, and then a sudden retreat on the part of those in front.

It was probable that they had leaped up the stairs and might be waiting to assail him as he passed; but Arthur took the chances of that and rushed down the hall, swinging his prisoner violently behind him, and leaping out through the open doorway.

Again in the street, he looked up and down

for a watchman or a policeman; but there was no sign of either, and he decided to hasten away from the spot lest its loneliness should tempt his assailants to renew their attack.

On the impulse of the moment he set out to find the nearest police station, but had not gone far before he desisted. The police would ask him a great many questions and, as sometimes happened in such cases, might treat him as the criminal.

Then he thought of returning to the stable to demand an explanation of what had happened, but reflected that if they had any knowledge of the matter there, they would be sure to deny it; so he determined to give himself time for consideration by waiting until the morrow before doing anything.

It was a deep disappointment to him to be thus turned from his search for Helen, but he was at once so troubled and so puzzled by the trap that had been laid for him while in the prosecution of that search that it seemed to him that he must abandon it for the present.

He did not mean to discuss the matter with any one, though it had occurred to him

at once that Herbert might be able to advise him. He could not, however, bring himself to tell Herbert all that would be necessary to make him understand how he fell into the trap.

He also thought of Amelia as one who would be interested, but he quickly put her out of his thoughts, too, and intended to seclude himself in his room, so that he might study the occurrence fully.

When he was passing Amelia's house, however, he could not resist the desire to see her, and, the bruise on his head being but a slight one, he acted on the impulse and ran up the stoop.

Afterward he was very glad he had acted on the impulse, for when he had been a short time with Amelia, he could not resist telling her, greatly to her horror, what had happened to him, and she at once had made the suggestion that he should employ a detective to look into the matter.

"How clever of you to think of that!" he cried.

"Oh," she laughed, "you know it is out of the mouths of babes that words of wisdom come forth."

"But," he went on doubtfully, "I would not care to let a detective know about Helen. I don't think it would be right."

"Then don't tell him. There is no need for him to know anything about her. Of course you don't want him to know anything about her. Good gracious! It would be horrid to have one of these men poking about one. Why can't you say you were trying to get the address of a model? That would mean nothing to him and would keep Helen's name out of it. The fact is, Arthur, I can't help connecting Charles Morgan with this."

"To tell you the truth he has kept coming into my head all the time. I wonder if he can be so revengeful that he cannot forgive me for taking the championship from him."

"Maybe," she said, with a funny affectation of shyness, "he is a little vexed with you for taking little Amelia away from him."

"Why, of course!" cried Arthur.

"Or for both reasons," she went on, laughing at Arthur's confusion. "Or maybe it is enough for him that he is base and can't help hating you."

"Ever since I met him that night he has kept coming into my thoughts. It certainly

was odd that I should meet him just where I did."

Amelia gave a quick, odd glance, but said nothing. She, too, thought it was odd, but she was not prepared to comment on it. The fact was that Amelia had begun to connect the mystery in Helen's life with Morgan, and that made her secretly uneasy.

On the way to the office on the following morning Arthur stopped at a private detective bureau, the chief of which was known to him through some work he had done for a client of his father's.

The detective was one of those men who would never attract a second glance in a crowd, so commonplace and colorless was he in appearance, so lacking in the keen alertness usually associated with men of his calling.

He listened quietly to Arthur's story, only occasionally asking a simple question, apparently to elucidate a matter of time or place; but when Arthur had finished he said to him in his even tones:

"Do I understand that you want me to find out who attacked you?"

"If you please."

"Is it of any interest to you to know why you were attacked in that peculiar way?"

"Naturally."

"But that may involve private history which you would prefer not to have known."

"Why, I think not," was Arthur's innocent response. "Certainly there is nothing I wish to conceal about myself, if that is what you mean."

"I didn't know," the detective said indifferently. "I thought from your concealment about the young lady that perhaps you preferred that I should not go deeper than the identity of your assailants."

"Concealment!" murmured Arthur, flushing; "I did not know I was concealing anything excepting her name. Besides, I don't imagine she can possibly play any part in the matter. That man Morgan may, but I don't see—" He stopped and looked uneasily at the unemotional detective.

"Do you want me to be frank, Mr. Raymond?" the latter asked.

"If you please."

"Well, I presume you are interested in the young lady you call a model, but I take it from what you have said and left unsaid

that you really know very little about her."

Arthur started indignantly to resent what the other had said, but remembered in time that his love for Helen and his perfect confidence in her did not in fact constitute knowledge. He wondered how the detective had guessed so well.

"I don't know a great deal," he answered slowly, and then added a little defiantly, "but I have the highest respect for her; and nothing can shake my confidence in her."

The detective bowed quite calmly, as if Arthur's confidence and respect were all one to him.

"The point I wish to make is this," he went on. "You have not told me all you can tell me. Some things evidently happened in the flat when you went there that may have some bearing on the case. Now, I don't ask for any information you prefer to keep to yourself, but I do say that it may save me time and you money if you will trust me. And I may add that it will be better not to employ me if you do not trust me absolutely; for if I enter upon this investigation I am sure to learn a great

many of the things you are keeping from me now."

All this was so reasonable, and the man seemed so indifferent, that Arthur at once decided to relate all the circumstances; and even went so far as to give the detective the bit of torn photograph. The only thing he said nothing about was the glove; and as to that, the truth was that he had not had the courage to take it from its comfortable resting place near his heart.

The detective asked a great many questions about Helen, causing Arthur to protest that nothing must be done to give her the least uneasiness. "Let everything be abandoned the moment her peace or comfort is put in jeopardy," he said earnestly.

"I suppose you would still like to know her address?" the detective said.

"Why yes, I think I would," Arthur answered; "but I don't want her spied upon."

"Nothing that you would object to in relation to her shall be done. I think there is nothing else I need to know."

"I suppose," Arthur said as he rose to go, "you are hardly able to say as yet anything

about the possible connection of Morgan with the matter."

"Oh, no."

"Shall I come in to-morrow?"

"No harm in coming in, but it is rather soon to expect results."

"Well, I'll step in as I pass by, and you can leave word in the outer office if you wish to see me."

He did inquire the next morning and the next, and on every succeeding morning for a week, receiving word each time that nothing had been accomplished. Then, at the end of the seventh day, he was ushered into Mr. Boyd's private office.

"You have discovered something?" he inquired eagerly; for since he had, himself, abstained from seeking Helen he had become doubly impatient.

"No," was the calm answer. "I have discovered nothing really. I am on the track of the fellows who tried to trap you, though, and hope soon to make you a definite report."

"But Miss Bertram?" demanded Arthur, who in fact had almost forgotten the assault on him.

"Oh!" was the mild exclamation, "I did

find out that the truck driver knew nothing about where she had gone. He only took her furniture to a storage warehouse. The same day she called with a carriage and took away two trunks. I have no clue to her at all. She managed her disappearance very cleverly. Evidently she had no wish to be found."

Arthur winced at a certain dryness in the tone of the man, but refrained from expressing any feeling. Others might think what they pleased of the mystery in Helen's life; he knew her and was certain that the mystery was in no way to her discredit.

"Was that why you saw me this morning?" Arthur asked.

"No, I wanted to ask you if you kept Saturday half-holiday at your office?"

"Yes."

"And can you remain there with your father next Saturday afternoon?"

"Of course."

"When will you be sure to be alone? I want the clerks and office boys, everybody but you and your father to be away when I come."

"But my father knows nothing of the matter," remonstrated Arthur. "And there is

no need that he should. This is a private affair of my own."

"You are mistaken, sir; your father is even more interested than you, I am sure. When I see you on Saturday I will explain why I say so. In the meantime permit me to remain silent; I am making sure of my facts."

"You ought to know," Arthur answered, "and I suppose I would better let you have your own way; nevertheless it seems to me that it would be wiser to let me know what you have so far learned."

"Well, Mr. Raymond," the detective answered, "you have engaged my services and if you insist, I must make my full report to you alone; but I earnestly beg that you will trust me so far as to wait until Saturday, so that I shall be able to give you some definite information, and also that you will accede to my wish to report to your father as well as you. I assure you you will be satisfied that I have done wisely when you hear my report."

It was impossible to doubt Mr. Boyd's sincerity; therefore, impatient as he was, Arthur forced himself to assent. He agreed to be alone in the office with his father at two o'clock on Saturday afternoon.

CHAPTER XXIV

If nothing has been expressly said of Arthur's perturbation of mind during the ten days that had elapsed since losing sight of Helen, it is not to be supposed that he had waited in serenity and calmness while the detective was engaged in his search.

He had discussed the affair with the sculptor, to whom he went daily to pose, but even more fully and confidentially he had talked it over with Amelia who was now his nightly confidant, and with whom he was now on those rare terms of friendship which can exist in their perfection only between persons of the opposite sex.

It had seemed to him that he could not endure the suspense, and if he had known how to set about finding Helen he certainly would have done so in complete disregard of the detective he had employed.

But he was quite at his wits' end, and so could do nothing but go over in his memory the talks they had had together, recalling the

tones of her voice and the expression of her eyes, her smiles and gestures. And these recollections naturally had the effect of increasing the passionate love that had grown up in his heart for her.

His father had noticed the signs of his inward perturbation, but had refrained from questioning him, fancying that it might arise from some new complication in his relations with Amelia, or even might be due to concern over Maude, who had returned home from the hospital after a "most successful operation," from which she was evidently going to be many months in recovering.

Arthur was obliged to make some explanation to his father, however, in asking him to remain in the office with him on Saturady afternoon; and after baulking several times, finally told him the whole story, beginning with his chance meeting with Helen and his immediate love for her.

Mr. Raymond, who had been very happy in the thought that a reconciliation had taken place between Arthur and Amelia, and was correspondingly disappointed in learning the true state of the case, nevertheless listened sympathetically to the end.

But when the end came and he discovered that there was a subtle connection between the assault on Arthur and his search for Helen he looked troubled and gravely shook his head. Nor did he overlook the possibility of Morgan's being a factor in the affair.

"Arthur, my boy," he said, "I am glad you have taken me so fully into your confidence. I shall not say a word against your loving Miss Bertram, who seems from your description to be a most estimable young lady; but because I know I have not long to live and that my duties must devolve on you, I beg you to exercise the greatest caution in choosing a wife. Your mother and your sister Maude, both invalids, will look to you to make the most of the business I shall leave. Of money I have not much—perhaps thirty thousand dollars, too carefully invested to bring a large income."

"There does not seem much of a possibility that I shall win Helen for my wife," Arthur answered.

"At least promise me that you will exercise more than ordinary care in the choice of one. I have a right to ask this of you

since by my will you are left in charge of my estate. Say that you will marry no woman whose life is not as an open book to you."

Arthur saw at once that the asking of such a promise was like a blow at Helen; and for a moment he hesitated lest it might seem that he was consenting to an injurious reflection on her. The next moment, however, he realized that even to hesitate was like confession of a doubt in his own mind; so he answered firmly:

"I promise you I will marry no woman whose life is not an open book to me."

Contented with this Mr. Raymond passed from the subject to others; and the father and son were engaged in a discussion of business methods and ventures when Mr. Boyd put in an appearance.

He entered upon his business with them in a way that was as direct as it was unemotional, saying as soon as the conventional greetings were over:

"Of course we are alone and cannot be overheard?"

"Quite alone," Mr. Raymond answered.

"Will you please permit me to tell my

story in an orderly way, so that I may miss none of the links? I shall be as brief as possible."

"Tell your story in your own way, Mr. Boyd; I know you will waste nobody's time," answered Mr. Raymond with a smile. "I ought to let you know that my son has fully acquainted me with as much as he knows of the matter."

"Then I will proceed. When I first took hold of the case it seemed to me one in which I should probably encounter the usual difficulties of an affair in which a mysterious female figured. Pardon my way of putting it, Mr. Raymond!"

Arthur flushed indignantly, but refrained from saying anything. The detective went calmly on:

"I had not gone far, however, before I discovered that, however important a factor the missing Miss Bertram was, there was something going on of more immediate importance even than her discovery, or the discovery of the identity of the man who had assailed you, sir; something that would interest your father even more than you."

Arthur's father started at this intimation,

and his haggard face took on an expression of keener interest.

"Interest me?" he said.

"Yes, sir; but it was not until last night that I got the last of the clews into my hands. That man, Charles Morgan, is at the bottom of all the mischief; and I may say incidentally that he is one of the most dangerous men I know. I think he has some cause for hatred of you, sir?" He turned to Arthur as he spoke.

"I was successful in winning the regard of a young lady he wished to marry some time ago; and I won the amateur championship at sparring also from him."

"Do you refer to Miss Bertram?" the detective asked.

"No, another young lady," answered Arthur, flushing under the keen glance of the detective, because he saw that he regarded him as a Lothario.

"Oh, yes, of course," murmured the detective, "you didn't know that the bit of photograph was part of a portrait of Morgan."

Arthur started to his feet, but quickly resumed his seat.

"How do you know this?" he demanded, trying hard to preserve his calmness.

The detective drew from his pocket the torn bit and a whole photograph, both of which he handed to Arthur, saying:

"You will see that the piece corresponds exactly. I think we may safely conclude that the young lady was pretty well acquainted with Morgan. Indeed, the woman and child in the adjoining flat recognized this as the picture of the man who had made several calls on the Bertrams. She said also that he was at the flat a few minutes after you that night."

"It has no meaning, father," cried Arthur, huskily. "If you knew her you would believe it."

"If it has no meaning it will be cleared away," said his father kindly; though in his heart he felt that Arthur had narrowly escaped being the victim of an adventuress.

"I confess," said the detective in his unemotional tones, "that I can see no connection between the young lady and anything that followed. Indeed it is perfectly clear that she has taken great pains to hide herself from Morgan as if she feared him. I

know nothing more about her—neither good nor bad, subsequent to her departure from the flat."

"And you have found no clew to where she has gone?" Arthur asked half defiantly, as if he would show by his interest in Helen that he refused to share in any unkind suspicion of her.

"None. I have made inquiries of all who have anything to do with her in New York, but only to learn that she had conducted herself always in a most careful and exemplary manner."

"You see, father," Arthur cried.

"Indeed I am rejoiced to hear such a report of her, my boy. But, Mr. Boyd," he added, turning to the detective, "in what way am I interested especially in all this?"

"In no way, sir, but it was essential to clear away that matter before going on. I had to discover Morgan's part in the affair, for I suspected him at once and supposed that I would find the solution of the assault on your son through an investigation of Miss Bertram."

"Yes, of course."

"Failing that, I shadowed the man, and

in the course of doing so was obliged to spend many of my evenings in a certain gambling hell on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street, the leading spirit of which is a man well known to the police and who calls himself Red Connor. It was through him that Morgan worked his scheme of vengeance against you, sir."

"Then Morgan was at the bottom of that attack? Have you sufficient evidence against him?" demanded Arthur.

"No evidence at all. I know this, but could not prove it. Oh, no, Charlie Morgan is no such novice in crime as to be easily caught. Besides the assault on you sinks into insignificance in comparison with the more stupendous and at the same time more subtle plot to ruin your family."

"What do you mean?"

"Have you a confidential man in your employ named Arnold?"

"Yes, that is the name of our bookkeeper."

"Do you keep close watch on him?"

"Close watch on him!" cried Mr. Raymond, growing paler than ever. "No. Why should I? He has been with me since he was a boy. What do you mean?"

"I mean that he has been Morgan's constant companion at the gambling hell; and that Red Connor and Morgan have been fleecing him."

"Merciful Heaven!" gasped Mr. Raymond, "the wretched young man will be utterly ruined."

"Do you know if he had much money?" the detective asked, while Arthur listened with a sense of boding disaster.

"He might have two or three thousand dollars."

"He has lost more than that at one sitting."

Mr. Raymond gasped for breath and pressed his hand to his heart. Arthur started up to check the detective's revelations, but Mr. Raymond, having gained control of himself, gasped slowly:

"Sit down, Arthur! You say Arnold has lost more than three thousand dollars at a sitting?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Raymond," said the detective, with a face of concern, "I did know you were ill, or I would have approached this matter more carefully."

"It does not matter now," was the

gasping response. "Tell me quickly all you know."

"I have seen the wretched man lose twenty thousand dollars within a week. I did not understand this at first as he used no money, but only gave notes for the sums he lost, but this evening he is to make good somehow; and that is what I wanted to see you about."

"The safe, Arthur!" Mr. Raymond gasped.

Arthur ran to the safe and hastily opened it. Arnold had the combination as well as Mr. Raymond and Arthur; and it was only that morning that thirty thousand dollars' worth of bonds belonging to a customer had been deposited there. And the bonds were negotiable!

Arthur swung the heavy doors open and was at the inner compartment where the bonds had been placed, opening it with trembling hands. His father and the detective stood by his side, watching eagerly.

"Thank God! the package is there!" cried Mr. Raymond, sinking wearily into a chair.

"Open it!" said the detective to Arthur.

Arthur cut the tape that had been wound

around the package, and opened it. The papers inside were worthless; the package had been opened and robbed.

"After him at once! Find him! We can catch him yet," cried Mr. Raymond, as the dreadful truth was apparent to him.

"Have no fear, Mr. Raymond," the detective said: "Arnold doesn't move a foot without being shadowed. He will do nothing with these securities. But tell me why they were put there. Surely that is not a safe place for them."

"I was going to put them in a safe-deposit vault this afternoon."

"And Arnold knew that you would have these securities here to-day?"

"He knew everything. They belong to one of my oldest customers, who was called suddenly to California to-day. I had the order to buy them for him several days ago, and was to deposit them to his order as soon as bought."

"It was Arnold's opportunity," Arthur exclaimed. "You would have put the sealed package in the vault, and the fraud would not have been discovered for weeks or perhaps months."

"Don't bother yourselves about Arnold or the bonds," said the detective, "but overhaul your books and securities and see how you stand. I will communicate with the police and have the arrests made. To tell you the truth, Arnold has done all he harm he can. I discovered at once that he was using no money, but was depending on something to happen to-day by which he could reimburse himself. The fool actually believed he was a match for those sharks."

"In heaven's name lose no time!" Arthur cried.

"Arnold can do nothing," the detective answered; "nor can he dispose of the securities. If he has stolen nothing but those bonds you are safe. I care nothing for Arnold now, but wish to catch Morgan red-handed, so to speak. If I can bag that bird I shall have done society a good service."

CHAPTER XXV

Mr. Raymond and Arthur were still working at the books when a messenger came from Mr. Boyd asking them to go to headquarters and confront Arnold and some other prisoners.

The other prisoners turned out to be Charles Morgan and Red Connor, both of whom vociferously denounced the police for their arrest and demanded instant examination before a magistrate; but it was not until Arthur and his father appeared that Morgan suspected that he had been the victim of a counterplot.

Arnold, who had been put in a cell by himself, was completely broken down. The bonds had been found on his person, but he had refused to answer any questions until confronted by Mr. Raymond, when he broke down completely and made a full confession.

By this confession Mr. Raymond learned that by one device and another is clients had been robbed of nearly twenty thousand dollars. It was not as bad as he had feared

at first, but he knew that it meant that his own little fortune would be almost wiped out in making good the defalcations of his trusted employee.

It would serve no useful purpose to follow in detail the legal struggle that followed. Arnold, it seemed, was glad to unburden himself of the guilty effort he had made to get rich in a hurry; and he told a story, pitiful enough as to himself, but fairly hideous as to Morgan.

He told how the latter had lured him on from step to step, insinuating one evil thought after another into his brain, until he never knew whether the theft he committed was suggested by his own thought or by Morgan's.

He made every reparation he could and freely gave evidence against Morgan. His own sentence was made as light as possible because of this and because he pleaded guilty.

Morgan, on the other hand, fought every step of the way; he obtained postponements and stays, and interposed every obstacle known to the law; so that it was Summer before a conviction was finally obtained for him; and even then a year's imprisonment

was all that could be dealt out to him in the way of punishment. Red Connor, the gambler, escaped altogether, nothing being proven against him.

Arthur was glad when sentence was finally passed upon his arch foe, but for some time he had ceased to give the matter any personal attention, the matter having gone at once into the hands of the district attorney, thus relieving him of care or responsibility.

This was the more fortunate that care, responsibility and sorrow too in no small measure had come to Arthur outside of the court-room, but all in consequence of the evil machinations of that villain.

Mr. Raymond had, from the first, thrown himself into the task of straightening out the tangle in his affairs. He was so manifestly unfit to do any sort of work that Arthur and the rest of the family had pleaded with him to rest; but almost sternly he had answered:

"No one else can do what I can. I must not die with my affairs in disorder."

He had not, indeed, died with his affairs in disorder, but death had overtaken him at the close of his task; coming suddenly and mercifully, as it seemed, though it was plain

enough from his will that he had known how and almost when it would come.

Everthing now devolved on Arthur, for he was left the business and was made sole executor of the will; this having been arranged with the consent of Mrs. Raymond and Arthur's sisters.

He had long since ceased to pose for Mr. Bernardo, though he made him occasional visits, always hoping through him to find Helen; for through all the weeks and months that had passed Helen had remained the lodestar of his life.

He knew very well that no one any longer had any faith in her. His mother and sisters and Herbert, too, knew all about her now; and they hardly disguised their distrust of her. Even Amelia could not hide the fact of her doubt.

So Arthur, steadfast in spite of all, devoted himself faithfully to building up the business which he felt was a trust for his mother and sisters, but never ceased to look for the one woman who fulfilled his ideal.

And now, too, full of his faith in the natural method of cure, and upheld in this by Amelia, who had made marvellous strides in

health and physical development, as well as by Herbert and Margie, he sought out the sanitarium where he had learned Robert might be taken with a view to being cured of his terrible malady.

The place was beautifully situated among the hills, about two hours' ride up the Hudson; and it was evident to Arthur the instant he came upon the grounds that it was in no respect like the hideous asylums for the insane of which he had read such harrowing tales.

The country, indeed, wore its smiling, early-Summer aspect, but nature had been aided to make the sanitarium grounds look exceptionally cheery and comfortable.

Many quiet, well-dressed men moved about in the shady places, or sat reading under trees, or played games in the lawn; and it seemed to Arthur that he could distinguish certain stalwart, alert young men in their midst as the helpers of the institution.

And Arthur was as agreeably impressed by Dr. Wendel, the head of the institution, as by the aspect of the place. He was an elderly man, with a massive head, set on broad shoulders. He wore a full beard, which was

almost white and was allowed to grow quite long. His hair was also long and white. He had great, over-hanging eyebrows, deep-set eyes and strongly marked features.

Perhaps the thing that more than anything else impressed Arthur, however, was the fact that whether in the steady glance of his eye, the deep tones of his voice, or the composure of his movements, there was a sense of indomitable compelling force.

He told Dr. Wendel about his brother Robert and asked him to visit him and give an opinion about his case. The doctor listened attentively, asked some questions and looked at his watch.

"I was going to the city when you were announced," he said. "There is still time to catch my train. Let us go."

When Dr. Wendel was taken to the Raymond home and saw Robert, he shook his head pityingly, saying:

"If he can be cured now, he could as well have been cured years ago. I do not know that anything can be done, but if you wish I will try."

"We do wish," Arthur answered. "Can you not give us some hope?"

"If I had not some hope I should not take him," was the answer, "but I may not promise you anything. In case he is restored to reason, you must bear in mind that he will be like a child and will have to be educated like one, excepting that his progress will be much more rapid. But remember, I can promise nothing."

Mrs. Raymond, who had been opposed to having Robert sent away, and who had yielded at last only reluctantly, had been present listening intently. Now she spoke.

"We have been assured that Robert is incurable, so that we shall have no right to blame you if you do not succeed. I shall be glad to have you try, however, for I am satisfied that you will be kind to him."

"As if he were my own son, madam," was the earnest response.

So it was that Robert was sent away to the sanitarium; and in spite of the conservatism of the doctor, hope prevailed where the afflicted young man's presence had always been synonymous with despair and gloom.

Indeed, Amelia's extraordinary improvement in health, following Arthur's, had greatly

affected Mrs. Raymond's opinions on the subject of natural methods of cure, and she was even considering the matter of taking it up for her own cure. Only poor Maude was obdurate and irreconcilable; and she, alas! was fast becoming a confirmed, peevish invalid.

As for little Gertrude, to whom Arthur was passionately devoted, she was looked upon as a magnificent monument to physical culture methods; for she was never sick, was always happy, and could play from dawn to twilight without even a sign of fatigue.

The members of the family, seeing Arthur's passionate love for the baby, said among themselves that it was a very good thing for him that she was there to divert him from the love of which they did not approve, but which seemed to have completely gone out of his life.

But if they fancied anything could divert his thoughts from Helen, they reckoned with a very poor knowledge of him or the overwhelming nature of the love he had given to her.

The fact was that while he absorbed himself in his work and was meeting with marked success in it, yet the undercurrent of his

thoughts always was running on her. And when his work was done at the office he was constantly devising plans for finding her.

But there was another matter, outside of his business, which occupied some of his leisure; though he said nothing of it even to his family, lest they should blame him and call him sentimental.

He had, in the first place, done all he could do to obtain a light sentence for Arnold, and after the latter's imprisonment had gone to him and offered to do whatever he could for his family.

Arnold, altogether penitent and very grateful to Arthur, had accepted the proffered assistance, and had the comfort of knowing that his innocent wife and children were being protected from the utter want and misery that must have fallen to their lot but for Arthur's help.

Employment had been found for the oldest boy in an office, and work at home for the oldest girl; so that with a small sum weekly from Arthur the family was able to feel itself beyond the reach of the sharp tooth of want.

One day in midsummer Arthur received a letter from Arnold, asking him to visit him

if possible at the prison, as he had a communication to make, which he would rather not commit to writing. Supposing it was something concerning his family, Arthur went up to Sing Sing on one of the days when visitors were permitted to see the prisoners.

"It was not to express by word of mouth my gratitude for all your undeserved kindness that I asked you to come here," Arnold said in a low tone, after an involuntary and fervent outburst of feeling, "but in order that I might warn you against the machinations of Morgan."

"Morgan! what can he do?" Arthur demanded in surprise.

"I don't know what he can do, but he is a man whose evil mind is never at rest in working wickedness. And he hates you with a truly diabolical hatred."

"Well, I know that," Arthur answered, "but I don't see that he can do anything until he is free from prison anyhow. And after that I think I shall be able to take care of myself."

"I know you are brave and strong," the other answered, "but the honest are always at a disadvantage with the vicious. The

trouble is that you cannot be sure that he is not working against you even while he is in prison. He told me the other day that he was preparing such a revenge on you as would make you wish you had never crossed his path."

"Well, thank you for warning me, but I don't see what I can do beyond being ordinarily careful. I certainly cannot keep myself in a fever of fear on his account."

"At least be careful. And above all be on your guard against a very beautiful young woman, who, I have reason to believe, is his ally and agent—his wife, in fact."

"His wife! He is married then?"

"He told me so himself after a visit from her a few days ago."

Arthur would not have admitted to himself why he trembled so violently that he could hardly articulate his words as he demanded:

"What does she look like? I ought to know that in order that I may be on my guard against her."

"I cannot tell you what her face is like, for I saw her only at a distance; but it was plain enough that she was young and beauti-

ful, and one of the men here told me she was the finest woman he had ever seen."

"Tall?" asked Arthur in a tone he vainly tried to make careless.

"Above the middle height I should say, but really magnificent in her proportions; and as she moved away after talking with Morgan I was struck by her queenly carriage."

"Well," said Arthur, with a feeble effort to laugh, "I shall be on the lookout for a magnificent woman. By the way! does she come here often?"

"She has been here twice to my knowledge, but may have come oftener."

"Merciful Heaven!" murmured Arthur, when he had left the prison, "why am I so base, so untrue to that pure and lofty nature as to connect her even by the most transient thought with this visitor of that scoundrel?"

And yet he could not keep from his thoughts the haunting image of Helen mingled with that of the woman described to him by Arnold. Nor could he bring himself to tell Herbert the story related to him by the imprisoned man.

Over and over again he upbraided himself

for being so far untrue to Helen as to fear to speak of the warning to Herbert; and yet all the while there continued to run in his brain the train of circumstances as they would be sure to present themselves to Herbert or to any one who knew them.

There were the undoubted facts of Morgan's acquaintance with Helen, his occasional visits to her at the flat, his claim that she belonged to him, his photograph in her possession, a mystery in her life; and finally this visitor to him in prison, bearing such striking resemblance to a correct description of Helen, and Morgan's declaration that she was his wife.

What wonder that Arthur felt despair in the vain effort to unravel the tangle!

CHAPTER XXVI

By request of Dr. Wendel, the members of the Raymond family had refrained from visiting Robert, contenting themselves with a weekly report from the doctor.

This report said nothing more than that Robert remained in good health, refraining from any intimation, even, of his mental condition. But this was according to the agreement made with the doctor, who had at the beginning pointed out the impossibility of giving any positive information for a number of weeks.

Finally, however, Arthur received a letter from Dr. Wendel, telling him that if he and his mother wished to visit Robert, there would be no objection to their doing so.

Mrs. Raymond was too nervous to trust herself to go, and begged Arthur to go alone this first time; and he did so, choosing a beautiful day in the late summer for his visit.

He felt certain that he would find Robert greatly improved, reasoning that the doctor

would have confessed his failure at once if he had been unable to afford any relief to the poor patient; but he did not dare allow himself much hope, remembering the years during which Robert had been a hopeless maniac.

The old doctor greeted Arthur cordially when he reached the sanitarium, and smiled so cheerfully as he shook him by the hand that Arthur could not fail to cherish an augmented hope at once.

"How is Robert?" he demanded, eagerly.

The physician placed his hand on Arthur's shoulder in a manner instinct with benevolence.

"I wish your mother had come with you," he said, "in order that she might share with you the good news it is my privilege to impart."

"You do not mean that Robert is well?" Arthur cried, a note of incredulity in his voice.

"Perhaps," answered Dr. Wendel, smiling, "you and I interpret that word well, differently. I call him well because the tumor, which pressed upon his brain and caused his insanity is quite gone."

"And he is sane?" Arthur demanded.

"He is as sane as you or I."

"It seems impossible," murmured Arthur.

He sank into a chair quite overcome with the thought, which was as if it had come to him without warning; for with all his prejudice in favor of the natural method of dealing with disease, he had never dared permit himself to believe that his brother could be cured of his terrible malady.

"Nevertheless it is true," the doctor said, kindly. "He is as well though not as vigorous as you; you could not expect that. And of course, while perfectly sane, he has much the manner of a feeble-minded person, because he is mentally what he was at six years of age. You must bear that in mind when you meet him."

"Yes, I had counted on that," Arthur answered.

"And remember that he will not recognize you. You are less to him now than I or my attendants or those of my patients with whom he has been in the habit of associating."

"And he will not recognize his mother, either?"

"I should be amazed if he did. It is as

if he had been taken away from her at six years of age and not brought back until now. She will be naturally as much a stranger to him as if they had not met during all these years. But come! See him first and you will be better able to discuss his case with me; for I wish you to ask every question that suggests itself to you, so that you will be the better prepared to care for your brother when you take him home."

"Let us go, then," Arthur said, rising. "I am ready now to see him, though I will confess that I was overcome by the news that he was really cured. It is almost unbelievable that one who has been in the darkness of insanity for so many years has at last been brought into the light of reason. But what a terrible arraignment this is of the 'regular' physician who immured my poor brother in his solitary room, with the threatening chains and straight-jacket as his only diversion!"

"Ah!" answered the good old physician, shaking his head, "do not blame the doctor; he was the victim of the world's mania for regularity. Who is the most reprehensible individual known to society if not he who

dares to be irregular? Society has no patience with the man who is not regular in politics or religion, or medicine, or anything else. You employed a regular physician, and it was his business to be regular. He acted regularly and as his time-worn books bade him. Surely, he was guilty of no fault in following regular methods. It is true he did not use reason in his treatment of your brother, but you must always bear in mind that you did not pick him out for any other reason than because he was 'regular.'"

"It is true," Arthur admitted; "I ought not blame Dr. Brayton for being what he was employed to be. The fault was ours in employing him. And yet it is difficult for the ignorant layman to decide for himself."

"Alas! that physicians make such a mystery of what should be in the main but a matter of such plain, common-sense that the most ignorant layman can understand. But the 'regulars' fight in vain for the perpetuation of ignorance among the laity, and the followers of the natural method increase apace. But there, in that group, is your brother; see if you can pick him out!"

They had left the house and were crossing

the spacious lawn when the doctor called Arthur's attention to a number of men engaged in playing some game.

"It is a very simple game," he explained, "but it is one that calls for alertness of mind and body. We call it 'base,' but it is only a variation of the good old game of Puss-in-the-corner."

And Arthur watching the game for a few moments as he stood there trying to recognize Robert, saw that there were bases sufficient for all the players except one, and that it was the object of that player to steal a base from one of the other players at the first opportunity. As all those who held bases were constantly changing, this was not difficult, though it required considerable activity and made an interesting game for persons of undeveloped mentality.

"These men were all insane at one time," the doctor explained, "and some were raving maniacs when they came here."

"And all are well now?" Arthur inquired, his eyes flittering from face to face in a vain search for the one that was familiar to him.

"Well, or nearly so. Do you recognize your brother?"

"I confess I do not."

"Look at the young man standing near that tree."

"Is that Robert?"

"Yes, it is your brother. No, don't go to him; I will send one of the attendants for him, so that you may see him away from the distraction of the game."

Robert was accordingly brought to where Arthur stood with the doctor, and Arthur studied him earnestly as he approached. He could indeed now distinguish the features of his brother, but how altered!

The young man who now approached him with an active stride had a look of intelligence as well as of health; and as his eyes fell on the doctor, a smile of affection lighted up a countenance that was really handsome.

His skin was no longer ghastly and pallid as formerly, but tanned and ruddy in color; and when he was near enough Arthur could see that in place of the terrible wildness and vacancy that had filled his eyes once, there was a mild look of intelligence.

Arthur fairly trembled with excitement; for in spite of the doctor's assurances, he

had found it impossible to believe that he would find his brother entirely relieved of the awful malady that had until now cursed his life.

"Dare I speak to him, doctor?" he whispered.

"Speak to him, certainly, but do not try to awaken his memory by questions he could not understand, but might perhaps be disturbed by. I do not believe you could disturb him by any questions, but it is best to take no risk. You can judge by his way of responding to me how almost infantile his mind is. How are you to-day, Robert?"

Robert was shyly watching Arthur, much as a child would regard a stranger visiting at its home. He smiled and nodded his head at the doctor's question, but did not speak.

"How do you like the game?" pursued the doctor.

"Fun," answered Robert, shaking his head emphatically and smiling broadly.

The doctor asked a number of simple questions which Robert either answered in monosyllables or by nods and smiles, indicating plainly enough the perfectly elementary character of his mental training, but also show-

ing that he was now as sane as either Arthur or the doctor.

Arthur, for mere gratification of speaking with his restored brother, asked him a few questions, but not knowing the limit of his comprehension, did not draw out very intelligent answers.

But it was enough for Arthur that he was justified in taking to his mother the report that her eldest son was absolutely cured of his malady, and needed only time before he would be in complete possession of his powers of reasoning.

"He will need to be educated as if he were still a child," the doctor said, as they walked away toward the house, while Robert gladly returned to his play.

"And will it take long to bring his intellect to maturity?" Arthur asked.

"I can promise nothing as to that," was the careful response, "but I have known cases of improvement so marvelous in its rapidity that it might transcend your belief if I were to recount them. You may be sure that with careful instruction he will make wonderful strides in learning. After he has been here a few weeks longer, you may safely take him

home. Let him live as you have lived, so that his body will be in perfect order and I may almost say that you cannot push his mental growth too rapidly."

"You mean that if sufficient time is given to the body the brain will be in such condition that it will do all the work given it?"

"That is just what I mean. Now while we have a few minutes to spare, shall I tell you how I accomplished results which seem to you so wonderful?"

"I shall be very grateful to you, doctor, for I am frank in saying that if I had not seen my brother I could not have believed that you had done what you have; and the more I marvel at the results the more I desire to understand how they have been accomplished."

"At least," said the doctor, with a smile of meaning, "there is nothing either regular or mysterious in my methods; indeed, the simplicity of them is such that few to whom you may tell of what has happened will credit you."

"I am sure of that," said Arthur, "for when I try to induce others who are suffering from drugs or disease to try the method

that snatched me from the doom the doctor had pronounced on me, they mostly smile in pity of my credulity."

"I may say of your brother's case in the beginning," went on the doctor, "that it was of such long standing that I had only slight hopes of effecting a cure; but I felt also that if our methods would not do, none would, since if Nature refused her assistance there was nothing else to look to."

"I understand you."

"You will remember that you told me your physician had diagnosed your brother's trouble as a foreign growth in the brain."

"Yes."

"Well, my own diagnosis agreed with his, and that fact simplified matters for me. Fasting was plainly indicated, for my experience with fasting as a means of removing disease of all kinds has shown me beyond all possible doubt that a foreign growth of any kind can be absorbed into the circulation by simply compelling the body to use every unnecessary element contained within it for food. The results of fasting are very simple. After one has fasted for a few days, and all the attainable nourishment that can be absorbed from

that which remains in the alimentary canal has been used, the body then begins to feed upon itself. It first uses all those elements which are not needed to actually perform a service for the body, either functional or otherwise. The fat first disappears; after this all other foreign substances are gradually used, and tumors and foreign growths of any kind existing in the body will be drawn upon for its nourishment."

"Surely that is logical," interjected Arthur, who had listened with an intelligence equal to his interest.

"Yes, I think it is perfectly logical. Of course, where a foreign growth has become hardened, sometimes one long fast will not accomplish the result, but where they are soft, the fast will usually cause them to be absorbed. We started your brother upon a long fast almost immediately upon his arrival here. At first he was very difficult to manage, but after he had fasted three or four days he lost all desire for food, and, though we put it within his reach on the thirtieth day of his fast, he did not eat until after having fasted thirty-eight days. At the conclusion of his fast he was very thin; he had wasted away

almost to a skeleton, but there was a gleam of intelligence in his eyes that had not been there before. I felt then that he was cured, but I did not wish to delude you with a false hope, so I waited until I could say with absolute certainty that your brother was perfectly sane."

"And that he is so I confidently assert," answered Arthur. "We can pay your charges, doctor, but we can never cancel the obligation we are under to you. My sisters and I have a brother and my mother has a son where none existed before. Ah, that my poor father had lived to see the light of reason shine in his eldest son's eyes!"

CHAPTER XXVII

AMELIA formed one of the eager, anxious group that awaited Arthur on his return home from the sanitarium, and, by general request, she remained while Arthur told the wonderful story of his brother's complete cure.

It was difficult for them to believe the tale he had to tell, and they plied him with question after question, searching for the weak points in his story, before conviction of his correctness came to them.

To Mrs. Raymond it was like the story of a loved one come to life again; and when she had first doubted and then accepted, she began with eager joy to plan for her recovered boy's future.

Arthur explained fully what the doctor's views on Robert's education were, and they discussed the possibility of one of the family acting as his teacher so that no stranger might be brought too close to their private affairs.

For one reason or another none of the

family were suitable, however, and it was about decided that they must overcome their dislike to the employment of a possibly unsympathetic stranger, when Amelia, who had listened in silence, said:

"I can recommend someone who, it seems to me, is very well fitted for the position, and who will certainly be both sympathetic and discreet."

"Who is it?" Arthur demanded, quickly. "Anyone we know?"

"It is a person you know very well; one who is a physical culturist as well as a fairly well-educated person. This person is a woman, and her name is Amelia Winsted. I know she would like to undertake the work, if only in gratitude for what this family has done for her."

"You, Amelia?" they cried, as with one voice.

She assented laughingly, but went on with deep seriousness:

"Everybody thinks I was made just to be a little butterfly, but I wasn't. I am a strong well woman now, thanks to Margie and Arthur, and I can no more be contented with doing nothing than if I were a man. I be-

lieve, you know, that it is just health and vitality that make men do things better than women, and to like to do them. Anyhow, I want to do something, and here's the very thing I am fitted for. Robert ought to be taught now by a sympathetic woman rather than by a man; don't you think so, Herbert?"

"I do indeed. I believe his soul and his mind will expand and open under your influence as it would not even under Arthur's."

"But think of the care and responsibility, Amelia," said Mrs. Raymond.

"I have thought of both, and I am not afraid of failing either in my duty or in my ability to carry out what I undertake. The truth is that I am what I am to-day because of what this family has done for me, and I want to prove my gratitude. Take my part, Arthur!"

She had risen and was standing in their midst, erect, robust, brimming over with vitality, and looking so lovely and winsome that Arthur was the only one of the group who did not feel a pang of regret that she was not to be his wife.

"Indeed," said he, looking at her with

frank admiration, "I shall feel as if Heaven were with us if you will undertake Robert's education. I know it will be irksome and difficult at times, but I am sure, too, that you will be more than repaid by the results you will obtain."

"Then it is settled?" she cried, eagerly.

"But your father?" asked Mrs. Raymond.

"Papa!" laughed Amelia, gaily, "why he does what I wish, not I what he wishes. Oh, I have him well trained, I can tell you."

They all laughed with her, for if ever there was a devoted daughter, Amelia was one; although it was true that Mr. Winsted seldom if ever opposed her.

So Robert's needs were most happily provided for; and when, early in October, he came home from the sanitarium, he was put at once under the tutelage of Amelia.

And now, to all outward appearance, poor Maude was the only member of the family who had any reason to complain; for while she obstinately refused to try any way of getting well excepting through drugs, her mother had finally made a complete surrender of her convictions, conquered by Robert's marvelous cure.

"I don't expect ever to be well," Mrs. Raymond had said, "but I believe in your way."

"Then why," demanded Arthur, "do you say you do not expect ever to be well? It seems to me your belief can't be very strong."

"I am too old," she said. "Why, Arthur, do you realize that I am fifty-two years old?"

"If you were sixty-two you should be made well," he answered; "but you must be good and do what we tell you to."

"I'll be more obedient than ever my children were," she answered, laughingly, "if that will do."

And it did do so well that it was not long before even Maude was obliged to admit that she had never seen her mother so well; but characteristically she explained the improvement by saying it was due to the treatment her mother had received from Dr. Brayton.

But if Arthur had good cause for contentment in the improved conditions in his home and also in his prosperous business, the fact still remained that he was unhappy. He could neither find Helen nor fill the void in his life made by her absence from it. And,

if others could not prove their suspicions against her, neither could he justify his faith in her perfect truth.

He was often tempted to employ the detective again in order to find her, but apart from the fact that the quest had already been pronounced too difficult, Arthur shrank from putting a spy on the track of the woman he loved. Perhaps, unconsciously, he was influenced by the thought of the startling likeness between the woman who had visited Morgan in prison and Helen.

One day, however, he received a letter which decided him to go once more to the detective. It came in his mail one morning, postmarked from the general post-office, and read as if written by an uneducated person. There was no signature; and but for its agreeing with other facts and suggestions, Arthur would have put it contemptuously aside.

"Mistur Arthur Raymind yood beter luk out fer truble. Morgin is in jale but he has frends outsid who wil doo yu yit. A frend of yoors rites this too tel yu to watch out."

Arthur put this precious epistle aside until he had attended to his other letters, when he

took it up again and studied it carefully, with the result that he took a car to the office of the detective and handed him the letter.

"Well," said the latter, "what do you think of it?"

"I don't know what to think; that's why I brought it to you. Arnold sent for me some time ago and told me to look out for Morgan."

"What do you want me to do?" the detective asked, eyeing Arthur keenly.

"I am going to leave that to you," was the answer. "I'm going to acquaint you with every development I know anything about; and I want you to help me."

The detective noticed how Arthur flushed and moved about uneasily before he could bring himself to begin, and he readily guessed that Helen was still the principal figure in the drama of Arthur's life; but, according to his system, he suggested nothing, said as little as possible and listened, trying most to guess at the things left untold.

In this case, however, Arthur told all he could think of, and answered fully all the questions with which the detective finally plied him.

"I don't think," said the detective at last, "that you are worrying much about the fear of being injured by Morgan."

"I don't think I am."

"What you really want to know about is, who that woman was."

"I suppose so," Arthur answered, hesitatingly. It was one thing to have a fear buried in his heart, and quite another to have it openly expressed; and, in fact, Arthur had yet admitted to himself as much as he saw the detective meant to make him say openly.

"You want to be sure that she and Miss Bertram are not the same?"

"I don't believe they are," said Arthur, stoutly; "but I want the matter cleared up. More than anything else I want to know where Miss Bertram is, so that I may talk with her."

"Suppose I find that they are the same; do you want to know it?"

"They are not the same; but if they should be, of course I want to know it. I don't want a guess, however, but only a complete assurance. I might as well be frank with you, for I have no news to tell you

when I say that I love Miss Bertram and have every faith in her truth and purity. I am not seeking to satisfy myself, but as long as the facts in my possession seem to implicate her in any disgraceful association I shall be unhappy. I want to know everything; I want to see her because I know that appearances, but not facts, are against her. You see, I go so far as to admit that appearances are against her."

"Nevertheless,' said the steady voice of the detective, "what you want is not vindication, but only the full truth? I must be sure of where I stand, and of what is expected of me."

"I want the truth—the full truth. I am not afraid of it."

Arthur went away from the detective's office feeling better than he had done for a long time. The fact was that appearances were so much against Helen that they had troubled him even though he had complete faith in her. But he had tried before to shut his eyes to the relation between the facts and Helen, whereas now he had faced the matter squarely and realized that the admission he had made had cleared the ground. Appear-

ances might be ever so much against her, he believed in her.

Without greatly concerning himself about the methods employed by the detective to discover Helen's hiding place and forgetful of the warning to be on his guard against his implacable enemy, Arthur went his way as usual. He never ceased to look for Helen wherever he was; he took what part he could in the education of his brother, who improved physically and mentally in a marvelous way; he prosecuted his business vigorously; he kept up his gymnastic work for health's sake; and for amusement generally devoted himself to little Gertrude, between whom and himself there existed an almost extravagant affection.

One afternoon in late October, when the days were rapidly growing shorter, he went over on the crowded East Side of the city to examine some real estate for a client who wished to invest there.

He had looked over the property and had started to walk home, having left instructions at the office for its closing. It was impossible to walk rapidly in the crowded streets, and he was going slowly, deeply in-

terested in watching the traffic, when he stopped suddenly, stared eagerly for a moment, and then with a cry of joy leaped across the street, pushing the pedestrians aside with so much rudeness that if he had not been so large and powerful he might have found himself in trouble.

He had no intention of being rude, however, but was quite unconscious of anything or anybody as he started in pursuit of a woman he believed to be Helen Bertram.

He had seen only her back, but it seemed to him that there could be but one woman in the world with just that poise of head, that rhythmic movement of the body, that firm stride.

Instead of taking the sidewalk, he ran along in the middle of the street, or rather in the gutter, heedless of his polished shoes, almost as heedless of the horses and vehicles, which he dodged mechanically, his eyes fixed on the woman with a passionate intensity of purpose.

He caught up with her, passed her, looked back and sprang upon the sidewalk. Her face was turned from him, and she was talking to another, older woman who walked by her

side. The face of her companion added to his certainty.

He made his way to her side, his heart throbbing so violently that he had to give himself time to compose himself, which he did by walking silently by her side, looking down at her.

At first she was not conscious of his presence, or thought, perhaps, that he was only a passenger walking by her; then her companion said something to her and she looked around.

"Arthur! Mr. Raymond!" she gasped; and his heart gave a great leap, for her calling him by his given name in that moment of surprise betrayed something of the intimate place he held in her private thoughts; and besides, there was that in her eyes and in the tone of her rich voice which filled him with hope.

"I have found you, Helen," he said; "I have found you at last."

Her breath came quickly and she glanced around as if for a means of escape before her self-control returned to her and she seemed able to return his eager, passionate gaze with a calm, steady look.

"I must not, will not talk with you, Mr. Raymond," she said. "Mother," she added, as if struck by a sudden thought, "this is Mr. Raymond, of whom I have spoken to you."

Arthur raised his hat and bowed with profound respect. Mrs. Bertram eyed him, as it seemed to him, with a certain sort of wonder and fear, and inclined her head the least bit.

"I hope you will be my friend, Mrs. Bertram," he said to her, "and let me visit you."

"That is for Helen to decide," she answered.

Helen had evidently been thinking quickly and decisively, for she spoke at once firmly, and yet with a note of pleading in her voice.

"Mr. Raymond," she said, "you must let this be our last interview. I cannot have you call upon me, I must not prolong this interview now. I left my old home in order that I might the more easily break forever with all who had known me up to that time. I have a right to demand that you make no further effort to see me or speak with me."

They were in the crowded street, so that

she was forced to speak in a low tone, but the intensity of her purpose was perfectly manifest. Arthur however, had not sought her for so long to leave her now with no more explanation than this.

"Not see you or speak with you again?" he said. "You ask what it is impossible for me to grant, Helen. I have sought you since the day you were lost to me; seeking you everywhere, thinking of you by day, dreaming of you by night, for I love you."

"No, no!" she cried; "don't say that. I have no—But I will not prolong this interview. Come mother! Mr. Raymond, you will not follow me if I tell you that I wish you to go your way. I have a right to ask you to leave me."

"Such a love as mine, Helen," he interposed, passionately, "gives the right to persist. I could not give you up if I would. Let me go home with you and there plead my cause. If you tell me after that I must leave you, then I will go."

"No, Mr. Raymond! You may not go home with me, and you must let me be the judge in this matter. If you—if you—really love me, you will heed my earnest wish—

yes, my passionate prayer to be allowed to go without more words. The time may come—"

She stopped, trembling and agitated, as if her emotion had overcome her and rendered her unable to proceed. Arthur demanded, eagerly.

"The time may come, Helen? Do you mean that the time may come when you will put aside the mystery which surrounds you and permit me to address you freely and frankly?"

"Yes, yes."

"But in the meantime, Helen," he pleaded, pressing close to her side and trying to see into her eyes, "have you not one word of hope for me?"

"I must say no more," she answered, greatly agitated. "I have already said too much. You will permit me to go now?"

"There are so many things I want to ask you," he said.

"I can answer no question. Oh, Arthur! can you not see that I am not a free agent. Be patient for a while longer and I will write you and tell you where you may see me; I will answer any questions you may ask.

Prove your trust and confidence in me by letting me go now."

"One question only," he pleaded, quite overcome by her agitation and by the appeal to his faith in her.

"And then you will permit me to go without further hindrance?" she demanded.

"If you will answer that question truthfully."

"I will; be it what it may."

"You know I love you; do you love me?"

"Oh, Arthur! I must not."

You promised me."

"Yes, yes; I do. Good-bye! Come mother!"

She fled from his side, having cast one passionate look into his eyes. And he stood there in the crowded street, all the important questions he had been storing up for this meeting still unasked.

But she loved him; her words and her eyes had told him so; and he was profoundly happy, singular as were the circumstances under which he had asked and been answered.

CHAPTER XXVIII

How strange and, in one sense, how unsatisfactory his interview with Helen had been, Arthur did not realize fully until he was nearly home, so full were his thoughts of the intoxicating fact that Helen loved him.

For himself, he was perfectly satisfied, but he knew that if he were to tell to any other what had taken place he would be laughed at for not insisting upon answers to all the vexing questions that had grown out of the mystery in Helen's life, in which mystery Morgan seemed so inextricably involved.

One day and another went by, and Arthur's restlessness increased with the days. He longed to see Helen again with the passionate longing of a lover, and he haunted the East Side of the city in the hope of coming upon her again as before.

He wished to feast his eyes upon her; he wished to ask her some of the questions which, his reason told him, the detective would have asked had he been the one to

find her. He wondered if he ought to tell the detective that he had seen her; he wondered if he might not better tell the detective that he need no longer search for her.

If he had not been so sure that the astute detective would scent the truth at once he would have told him to refrain from his search for her. He had never in his life been so uncertain and vacillating.

Then, one day, a letter reached him at the office from Arnold telling him that he was certain something positive had been decided by Morgan. And the letter went on in this way:

"I never saw him so full of fiendish glee. He told me nothing to give me the least clew, but his wife was with him again to-day, and when she went away he told one of the prisoners that on the morrow he was going to get square with the man he hated most in the world. And I know that that man is you. Do be on your guard!"

Arthur shrugged his shoulders over the letter. He was not easy to alarm. He was certain that it was absurd to suppose Helen and the wife of Morgan had the remotest relation to each other. He crumpled the

letter and dropped it into the waste-paper basket after hastily acknowledging it and thanking Arnold for his warning.

The afternoon, as he had so often done of late, he went over to the East Side to wander about in his vain search for Helen. And, as usual, he finally turned his face toward home, changing his loitering, uncertain step into a long, firm stride that carried him swiftly on his way; but nothing could alter his dissatisfaction with himself which had been growing with the days.

"To-day shall end it," he said to himself, as he strode along. "Either I must trust Helen fully and wait with what patience I may for her to act, or I must admit that I do not and cannot trust her."

He laughed aloud at the very thought of not trusting Helen.

"Trust her? Of course I trust her," he went on with his thought; "how can I love where I do not trust? And love her I do with all my soul. They why do I haunt these foul streets hoping to meet her and ask her questions each one of which is an evidence of distrust? No, I have done with it; I will come here no more for such a purpose. No,

if I find her I will feast my eyes upon her, but I will not even speak to her."

His decision brought him a new peace, and it was with a lighter heart than he had carried in many days that he sprang up the steps of his stoop and put his key in the door.

But before he could turn the key the door was snatched hurriedly open and he was face to face with his sister Maude, whose white face and shining eyes told him in advance of her words that something startling had happened.

"Gertie!" she gasped.

"What is wrong with her?" he demanded, grasping his sister by the wrist in his excitement.

"Lost! stolen! kidnapped!" she cried, incoherently.

With a swift realization that Maude in her hysterical condition would be unlikely to give him the explanation her words demanded, Arthur stepped past her quickly and darted up the stairs to where, at once, he could hear the excited voices of his mother and Margie.

He burst into the room and saw his mother

and Margie alone there, their faces as well as their voices betraying the anguish of their minds. Both turned to him at once, both speaking, but Margie's voice alone being heard by him.

"My baby, Arthur! Did they tell you? Stolen! stolen!"

She was making piteous efforts to be calm; but the strain she was suffering from showed itself all too plainly.

"Where is Herbert?" Arthur demanded, his mind working the more keenly and clearly that he saw the need that someone should be cool where all were distracted.

"Out looking for her."

"How do you know she was stolen? Why do you say so? You must be calm, Margie, so as to help me. Tell me everything clearly so that I may know what to do."

He was in an agony of fear and apprehension, for, already, in his brain was working the thought of Morgan and the letter of warning from Arnold. What if this were the way that monster had struck at him? He held himself in rigid self-control.

Margie pressed her temples with her two hands as if forcing herself to the calmness

necessary, biting her lip the while; then, with rapid speech, said:

"Susie"—Margie's little servant—"had Gertie out in the park. Oh, I think she must have been inattentive, but she said she suddenly noticed that Gertie was not with her and looked around. Away over by the drive she saw a lady carrying a child in her arms and stepping into a carriage. She heard a wail from the child, heard the door of the carriage slammed shut and saw the carriage driven away at a furious speed. Then she looked all around for Gertie, until she was sure that it was she who had been taken into the carriage. Then she came home."

"Where is Susie?"

"I don't know. Looking for Gertie, perhaps. Herbert questioned her. Here she is!"

The girl entered the room at that moment, her face bearing evidence of her distress. She shrank at the sight of Arthur, knowing his love for little Gertie. He questioned her quietly.

"What kind of looking woman was it you saw?"

"I only saw her back, sir; and all I can

remember is that she looked like a fine lady and was straight and broad."

An anguished thought of Helen flashed into his brain, for it came to him on the instant how the girl looking at Helen's back might so describe her.

"You heard the child cry out?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir; and I think it was Gertie's voice. It has been coming to me more and more all the time that it was."

"Has anyone been to see the policeman who was on that beat?" Arthur asked, suddenly.

"Herbert went at once."

"When did this happen? How long ago?"

"Nearly three hours ago. It was just before dusk."

"I tried to get you on the telephone," Maude said. She had followed him upstairs.

Arthur groaned. He had been over on the East Side hunting for Helen.

"Then Amelia took her carriage and went down to your office after you," Margie said. "I don't think she's back yet."

Arthur heard the noise of carriage wheels in the street and sprang to the window. By

the light of a nearby street lamp he saw Amelia follow a man out of her carriage.

There was something familiar in the man's figure, but for a moment Arthur could not place it in his memory. Then he remembered, and cried out as he darted downstairs to the door:

"Boyd! The very man!"

Clever little Amelia had gone to the office in search of Arthur, and, learning that he would not return there, had had the inspiration to inquire for the address of the detective and to go after him. She needed only to witness Arthur's hearty greeting of the detective to know that she had done wisely.

"Come upstairs!" Arthur said at once. "Come, Amelia!"

"Let Mr. Boyd go," she answered, "I have told him all I know. I must go to my own house, where I left Robert. He is greatly excited over the loss of Gertie, but promised to remain with papa until I returned home."

"God bless you!" Arthur murmured, and then led the detective upstairs. He introduced him to the family in a few words, and then said:

"Help us if you can! Get us back our little darling."

Prepared already by Amelia with a history of what had taken place, the detective took charge of the matter with his accustomed calmness and deliberation, turning to Susie and questioning her with a particularity that brought out more than the child herself had supposed she knew.

Especially the detective gained more details of the woman who had carried the child, and at each word that Susie spoke Arthur, with horror, noted the likeness between the woman and Helen; and he knew by occasional glances toward him that the detective was demanding of him to so note.

Finally, after questioning each member of the family, lest some particular had been overlooked, the detective turned slowly and impressively to Arthur and asked him:

"Have you anything to add to what we know?"

Moistening his lips, so that he might give utterance to his words, Arthur told of the letter he had received that morning from Arnold.

"You should have given that letter to me," the detective said.

"I know it now."

"Is there nothing more?" the detective asked. "Have you not seen Morgan's wife?"

"No."

"Then I have. I saw her talking with him at the prison yesterday, just as I saw you talking with her over on the East Side a few days before."

"My God!" gasped Arthur.

The detective went on with a sort of merciless calmness:

"Helen Bertram is his wife. Have you noted no resemblance between her and the woman described by this girl?"

"My god! My God!" moaned Arthur.

CHAPTER XXIX

For a few moments it seemed to Arthur as if a lasting horror had entered his soul. He felt beaten down and crushed. He forgot even the little child that had been stolen away from her home.

Then he remembered and he tried to think of Helen in the role of kidnapper. The thing was absolutely unthinkable. He started and looked about him. Everybody was staring at him. He felt as if an age had elapsed since he had heard the detective say that Helen was the wife of Morgan.

"It is impossible; I will not believe it," he stammered.

"I have here a copy of the record made at the clergyman's in Philadelphia," the even voice of the detective said, as he drew out a paper and handed it to Arthur.

Arthur read it through a mist. He was losing his hold on realities again. He saw Charles Morgan and Helen Bertram written on the paper, and he saw the seal of the

notary who certified that the copy was genuine and correct.

"There is some mistake," he said, doggedly; "the Helen Bertram I know is a noble woman."

"Was it not Helen Bertram you talked with on the East Side?" the detective asked.

"Yes, I talked with her and her mother."

"Is this her photograph?" he demanded with a curtness that was like cruelty, at the same time passing a photograph to Arthur.

Everybody looked eagerly to catch a glimpse of the face of the woman who, as they believed, had played so sinister a part in Arthur's life. He took the picture mechanically. It seemed to him as if they were engaged in hunting down the noblest and purest of women.

Yes, it was a photograph of Helen; there could be no doubt of that. He held it firmly, striving hard to keep out of his face the fear that was growing within his breast—not the fear that she really could be proven a party to any crime or any base deception, but that in some strange way the toils had been so drawn about her that she could not escape.

He wondered how the detective could have

come into possession of that picture, which he would at any time have given worlds to possess himself. He knew the detective was watching him, but he silently eyed the photograph, trying to regain control of himself.

"Is it her photograph?" the detective asked again.

"Yes, but what does it prove? It is her photograph. Look at it, all of you, and say if it is the face of a woman who would play the part he would try to make her guilty of."

He handed the photograph to the one nearest him and turned then to the detective as if to challenge him to make good any doubts he had cast upon Helen Bertram's name.

"I showed the picture to Arnold, and he said it was that of the woman who had been to see Morgan. I showed it to several of the prison authorities and they all recognized it. But the real question that concerns us is not whether or not this is a photograph of the lawful wife of Charles Morgan, but whether or not it was she who has stolen the child."

"And you say it was she?" Arthur queried almost fiercely.

"All the circumstances point to her," the

detective answered firmly, "but if you wish that I should not harbor such a suspicion I will retire from the case at once."

"No, no!" was the cry from all.

"No," said Arthur, proudly. "I am not afraid of what may happen. Let what may come, little Gertie must be found, and at once. That Morgan has something to do with the matter I am sure, but I do not believe that Helen has had. You will let me have the photograph?"

"Yes, you may have it. And now, if I am to take charge of the affair, I shall need some help from you. Will you assist me?"

"It is needless to ask; command me in any way and every way."

"Then come with me at once." He turned to the others and said: "Do not be disturbed if Mr. Raymond does not return to-night. If we learn anything of importance you shall be communicated with instantly."

With these words, and accompanied by Arthur, he hurriedly left the house and led Arthur to the park, where it would be possible for them to confer together without being overheard or noticed.

"Mr. Raymond," he said, in his curt way,

"it is important that you should follow up one clew while I follow another."

"Give me my orders."

"Here, on this slip of paper, is the address, on the East Side, of Mrs. Bertram and her daughter. Go there and find out what you can of them."

"Ah!" cried Arthur, "and you will trust to my impartiality, then?"

"No one has a greater stake in this than you," the detective answered. "I could not follow up this clew as well as your interest will make you."

"Good, I will go."

"One moment! If, as I think may be the case, you learn nothing to further our search for the child, go from there to the other address, which you will see on the paper, and which is that of a woman with whom Charles Morgan once boarded."

"And who has some knowledge of his wife, I presume," Arthur said, suspecting at once what the detective sought to accomplish by sending him about as he was doing.

"Who has some knowledge of his wife, for it was to her house that he took his bride on his return from Philadelphia."

"Very well," Arthur answered, "I will go, but I do not see how what I am set at can in any way enlighten us as to Gertie's whereabouts."

"Nor do I, but to either of those places the kidnapper may have gone. At any rate, they are places that must be visited; and I must have you as well satisfied as I am that Helen Bertram and Mrs. Charles Morgan are the same, for I am willing to stake my reputation on it that we shall find the child when we find Helen Bertram."

Arthur turned away with a pang in his heart, in spite of his courage and his faith in Helen. He knew the detective well enough to be sure that he was not one to say so much without good ground for it; and yet he could not, would not, entertain the horrible thought that she who had been so noble and pure in all she had done and said when in his company could be the depraved criminal necessary to play the part she had done if guilty of this act.

"And after that?" he asked in a low tone.

"After that, report to me at my office. I shall be there by the time you are ready to come. By the way, if you haven't had your

supper you'd better go in and get a bite at some restaurant. There may be some quick work for us to do to-night."

Arthur had no desire for food, but he knew he would be better for eating something; and, besides, he wished to collect his ideas before starting out on what might be an expedition fraught with terrible misery for him.

And when he was away from the presence of the detective he felt his confidence in Helen return, and in the same proportion his distress for Gertrude to augment.

It seemed as if he could not sit calmly eating, when that little, loving child might be suffering in the hands of her cruel captors; and, indeed, he ate but little and left the restaurant he had entered with more than half the food untouched.

He took the elevated cars down to Grand street and the street cars across to the East Side, and on the way he divided his time between studying the strong, beautiful face of the woman he loved and in anticipating her greeting of him when she should open the door of her rooms to him.

He had promised not to seek her, and now he was doing so; but he had decided to tell

her the whole truth about the suspicions of the detective, so that she would understand, and he even hoped she would make it the occasion of lifting the veil of mystery that surrounded her life.

"It will serve to show her," he said to himself, as at last he approached the address the detective had given him, "that it is unwise to lead the sort of life she does."

The house had once been the abode of some well-to-do person, who had been crowded out of that quarter by the encroachments of the tenements, which now filled most of the block.

The basement of the house was used as a grocery store, and the upper part was evidently let out in apartments, as was indicated by a sign fastened to the house near the door.

The door was opened in response to his ring by a neatly dressed German woman, whose face bore such an expression of simple honesty that he felt at once that he would have no difficulty in obtaining straightforward treatment from her.

"Come inside by my husband," the woman

answered, in response to his request to see Miss Bertram.

It seemed to Arthur that the woman had looked at him with an air of severity, and as he followed her into the rooms on the first floor a feeling of uneasiness took possession of him. He wondered why she had not said something about Helen, instead of asking him to see her husband.

The husband, a stout, stolid-looking German, was smoking his pipe when Arhur was presented to him as a "chentleman who vants to speak mit Miss Bertram."

"Dere ain't no Miss Pertram in the house, already," the man said, taking his pipe out of his mouth and looking solemnly at Arthur. "Vot you vant to see mit her?"

"I am a friend of hers."

The man stared at him in silence for a few moments, then said with a sudden heat: "I don't like such pizness. She ain't got no friends for six months already; den chust all at vunst she gets some friends ven she leaves de house. It's funny pizness, ain't it?"

"She has gone?" Arthur cried in dismay.

"Dis morning. She pays me de month, she takes her furniture und she goes. Den

begins her friends to come. Vot's de matter? You tell me."

The worthy man evidently felt as if he had a grievance, but Arthur, intent on his quest, and too disturbed by the sudden departure and by the plain mystery of this new movement of Helen's, went on with his questioning.

"Why did she leave?" he asked.

"Why don't you tell me dat already? I don't like peoples to leave mine house like dat."

"Didn't she give any reason for going?"

"Nein."

"How many have called to see her since she went away?"

"You make three already," the woman interposed, seeing her husband speechless with indignation.

With a sudden hope that there might be some mistake in the person they were talking about, Arthur drew the photograph from his pocket and showed it to the woman, saying:

"Is this the young lady who lived in your rooms?"

"Sure."

"Ach!" cried the man, with the gesture of

one who discovers a new wrong done him, "all her new friends have de pictures of her, too."

"The others showed you pictures of her?" Arthur demanded, quickly.

"Vun of dem," the woman answered; and then, with a close examination of the photograph, "it's de same picture."

"What did the man look like?" Arthur asked.

"He was shmall, and he ask questions und look at de rooms, und all de time he says noddings."

The description of the visitor as one who asked questions and said nothing, although absurd, yet described the detective so well that Arthur at once described him in his own words and discovered that it was he who had been there. And instantly it flashed through his brain that Mr. Boyd had sent him there in order that he might convince himself of Helen's complicity with the kidnapping or of her identity with Morgan's wife.

The confidence of the detective in Helen's guilt hung like a pall over Arthur, although his trust in her was not shaken. He could not

rid himself of the gloom which the detective's confidence inspired, but he was all the more determined to pursue his investigations thoroughly in order to be able to justify his own faith in her.

He plied the German couple with questions until at last they refused to say anything more, averring that they had already told him several times over all they knew.

The substance of what he learned was that Helen and her mother had led a most quiet and exemplary existence during the months they had lived there, going out very little and working hard at sewing; that they had had absolutely no visitors during all that time, but had had three since they had left.

Arthur could make out that Mr. Boyd had been one of the visitors, but he could get no clew to the identity of the other, excepting that he was well dressed, wanted to pay them for telling about Helen and had red hair and small eyes.

When he asked if they had given this information to the other caller, they answered yes, so that he knew that the detective had gathered all there was to be known.

CHAPTER XXX

PROFOUNDLY discouraged, but with unabated faith in Helen, Arthur left the house after first visiting the rooms occupied by Helen and her mother. It is needless to say that he had no hope of finding anything there that had escaped the notice of the detective. He went into the rooms to satisfy a lover's longing to look upon the bare walls that had once encompassed the object of his passion.

He offered the woman some money to compensate her for the trouble she had been at in his behalf, but she refused it peremptorily; so he bade her good night and descended the old-fashioned stoop to the sidewalk.

He was in such a perturbed condition of mind that he was not very observant of what was going on about him, but, as is often the case with persons who are preoccupied, he had a sense of being aware of a man standing on the opposite side of the street, lurking in the shadow.

But as the street was full of people, either hurrying along or loitering, he gave no further attention to the man in question, but slowly and moodily went his way.

Excepting for the mystery of Helen's sudden departure, there had come nothing to Arthur's knowledge yet to make him change his mind in regard to the woman he loved. He was troubled at the thought of the mystery in her life, but he was as far as ever from suspecting her of being either the wife of Morgan or the kidnapper of little Gertrude.

He walked slowly, trying to unravel the tangle his life had fallen into, but always unable to lay firm hold on one of the skeins. He could not make out even how he was furthering the discovery of little Gertrude by what he was doing.

He angrily wondered if the detective might not be making some foolish use of him, and he was tempted to give up his visit to the other address, and go at once to the detective. Then his better judgment told him that Mr. Boyd was hardly likely to do anything at such a time without a good motive.

He threw off his indecision suddenly and started off rapidly for the nearest line of cars,

for the second address was on the West Side not far from the lower end of Central Park.

Several times he looked back with an uneasy sense of being followed, but as he saw no one having the appearance of being in pursuit of him, he dismissed the notion and forgot it.

It was nearly ten o'clock when he reached the house he sought, and the street was as quiet as the one on the East Side had been noisy. In fact, he saw no one but a man on the other side of the street, some distance behind him, who had made his presence known by whistling one of the popular tunes of the day.

"I would like to see Mrs. Fenton," Arthur said to the neat maid who opened the door to him; and the girl led him into a comfortable parlor.

When the maid had gone with his card to seek her mistress, Arthur looked about the room in search of something to betray the character of the occupants, but he saw at once that he was in just such an apartment as might be found in any one of a hundred boarding-houses of the better class in New York.

And when Mrs. Fenton entered with his

card in her hand, he saw that she was one of a class—a boarding-house keeper from her worn, tired face to her neat but shabby gown.

"I hope you will forgive me for troubling you, Mrs. Fenton," he said, rising as she entered. "I came to make some inquiries about a Mr. Charles Morgan, who I am told once boarded here with his wife."

"Sit down, please," she said; "yes, he was here for a short time. He was arrested afterward and sent to prison, I think."

"He is in Sing-Sing now. Do you remember his wife?"

"No one would be likely to forget her, sir. I hope the poor girl is in no trouble through her husband's misdoing."

"None that I know of. Would you remember her face?"

"Perfectly."

"Will you describe her to me?"

"Her face?"

"Her general appearance."

"She was above middle height, I should say, but the most splendid woman I ever looked at; she had such wonderful poise and grace, and walked like a queen rather than like an ordinary woman. She said that was

because she was so well developed muscularly."

"Oh, heaven!" Arthur murmured.

"As for her face—well, it was not the most beautiful I ever saw, perhaps, but it was one that grew upon you until it seemed that it must be the most womanly, the truest and, yes, the fairest face in the world. And such strength of character! Ah, they made a fine couple."

With a throbbing heart, and with a reluctance that shamed him, Arthur drew the photograph from his pocket and handed it to her.

"Do you see any resemblance?" he asked, huskily.

Mrs. Fenton's face lighted up the instant she looked at the picture, and the words came spontaneously:

"Oh, yes, that is Mrs. Morgan; no one could make any mistake about that. I am sure this must have been taken near the time she married him. In fact, I was talking about this very picture with a friend of hers who is boarding with me now, and who was showing it at the table as the most beautiful woman he had ever seen in—"

"A friend of hers boarding here now?" cried Arthur, scenting a new and disagreeable discovery which the detective had prepared for him. "What is his name?"

"Mr. Boyd."

It was the detetive himself. Arthur shut his jaws hard together to keep back the exclamation that leapt to his lips.

"Oh!" he murmured when he could control himself, "Has he boarded here for a long time?"

"Only about a week. It came out almost the first day he was here that he knew her, and I asked him all about her."

Arthur could see the detective leading the good woman on until he had wormed every detail of Mrs. Morgan's life there out of her. He knew now for a certainty that he had been sent to these two places for no other purpose than to convince him that Helen was the wife of Morgan.

In the face of the evidence, however, he clung obstinately to the belief that there was some hideous mistake that would be revealed as soon as Helen could be told of the suspicion she lay under.

He made no effort to find out anything

more, but with the first excuse that suggested itself to him rose and left the house.

"Now I will go see him," he muttered, and strode angrily toward Ninth avenue, where he took a Broadway car.

In walking through the street he had again that uneasy sense of being followed that he had had on leaving the house on the East Side; but had been unable to see anybody when he looked behind him, and had again dismissed the notion.

As he sat in the car, however, he chanced to look toward the rear end just as the car was passing a powerful electric light, and he saw a face that was familiar to him, though for the moment he could not place it. He looked again, but the man's back was turned toward him and he could not see his face.

It was rather mechanically than of design that he began to puzzle out what it was in the face that was familiar, but presently it came to him with a rush of memory. It was the face of the man who had been tried with Morgan for complicity in the robbery of his father—Red Connor.

"Red Connor, Red Connor," he murmured to himself; and again there was a flash of

memory and he recalled the words of the German woman: "Red hair and small eyes." It was thus she had described one of the men who had come to see Helen that day.

Could it be that Red Connor had really visited that house in search of Helen? What could he want with her? He was Morgan's friend. Arthur felt a clutching at his heart.

Then he remembered his feeling of being followed, and wondered if that man had been shadowing him. He wondered how he could find out, hoping that he had wit enough to catch the fellow if he really were shadowing him.

He stopped the car at Forty-seventh street and walked briskly toward the West Side as if intent on reaching some place with the least possible loss of time. Some building operations were going on on the street with small construction sheds lining the sidewalk.

He slipped behind one of these and waited. eagerly. For a little while he heard nothing; then a swift, light footfall, and as he peered out he could see a slight, lithe figure coming rapidly toward him. He could not be sure, but he believed it was Red Connor.

He stepped out from his concealment and

blocked the way. The advancing man gave a start and would have turned across the street, but Arthur's strong hand was on his shoulder, holding him as in a vise.

"You were following me," he said sternly.

"You're a liar," was the response. "Let go of me, or I'll put daylight through you; or to be precise, electric light."

But Arthur was sure of his man now; he remembered the peculiar voice. He caught him by the wrists and forced him to go with him further down the block to where there was enough light to distinguish his features by.

"You are Red Connor," he said.

"Yes, I'm Red Connor, but that's no reason why you should lay hands on me. I may as well tell you, Mr. Raymond, that I am a bad man to mix up with."

"I've met bad men before," Arthur answered dryly. "I'll thank you to come with me. You ought to be glad to know where I'm going to end my night's wandering; you ought to be tired of following me, too."

"You're a bigger man than I am," said Red Connor coolly, "and I shall have to go with you until we find a policeman."

"Yes, I think so; and after that too, if I'm

not mistaken. I don't believe you will care to make your explanations at the sergeant's desk, though."

"What explanations?"

"What were you doing at the house of Miss Bertram?"

"Miss Bertram? Oh, you mean Mrs. Morgan, I suppose. Why shouldn't I visit her? Is there any harm in going to see the wife of a friend?"

"Why do you say she is his wife? You know that is not the truth," Arthur said, huskily.

"Isn't it? Oh! Well, I thought she was his wife. He said she was, anyhow, and I supposed from her going to see him in prison that she was; but if you say she isn't, of course that settles it."

The man's manner was indescribably insolent and sneering, and his words seemed crammed with innuendo. Arthur's grasp on the slender wrists tightened fiercely.

"If you don't mind," the gambler said coolly, "I'd like a little less pressure. I know you're strong. Thank you"—as Arthur relaxed his grasp—"that is better. Now, will you be good enough to say what it is you

want of me? I have a little business on hand this evening, and would like to attend to it."

"Do you mean to follow me quietly?" Arthur demanded.

"Follow you? Oh yes."

"I mean go with me; I shall not release you."

"If I refuse?"

"Then I shall use force, or hand you over to a policeman."

"Have you a warrant, then, or some charge to make against me?" the gambler asked ironically.

"I guess there won't be need of any specific charge if I tell a policeman who and what you are. And when it comes to the sergeant my friend, Mr. Boyd, will know what to say."

"Oh, the detective? Is he a friend of yours? Now, that's very interesting. And where did you say you were going with me?"

"Just a few blocks from here."

"Boyd's place, perhaps," said the gambler.

"Yes, his offices. He is waiting there for me and will be pleased to see anyone who knows so much about Morgan and Morgan's wife."

"Miss Bertram, you mean," laughed the gambler.

"If you are wise you will use that name as little as possible and always with the utmost respect," said Arthur in a tone that warned the other of the danger of angering him.

"Oh, well," said the gambler with an air of indifference, "if it will give you any pleasure to have my company in your little party, I'll go with you. By the way, is there any special reason for all this rushing about tonight?

"You shall be informed of everything you have any concern with when Mr. Boyd is ready to tell you."

"Shall I? Come on then! I have a deal of curiosity. Boyd's? Let me see! It's on Broadway, I think."

Arthur locked his arm in that of the gambler and, without answering him, led him toward Broadway. When they turned into that thoroughfare, and as they were approaching Forty-second street, where the real life of Broadway begins, the gambler broke into a low chuckle and altered his manner so that anyone looking at them must have sup-

posed they were a pair of close friends walking arm in arm.

"I was thinking," said Red Connor, "of the impression that will be made on any of your good friends to see you arm in arm with one of the most notorious gamblers in New York."

"They may think what they please," Arthur said curtly, and then added with a sarcasm that cut even the gambler, "but my friends are not such as would have the least knowledge of such as you."

"I don't wonder that Charlie Morgan wants to do you," Red Connor snapped out.

CHAPTER XXXI

ONCE during the short walk the gambler thought he saw a chance to escape from the arm that was locked in his, and he made the attempt, but profoundly affected as Arthur was by the doubts and fears that now assailed him, he was too alert to be caught unawares, and his hand had closed in an iron grip on the other's shoulder in an instant, making the gambler cry out with the pain.

A few minutes later they walked together into the offices of the detective, who sat at his desk in earnest colloquy with one of his men. He started at the sight of the gambler with Arthur, but instantly controlled himself and was as stolid as ever before his surprise could have been detected.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Raymond—and your companion also."

"Any news of the little girl?" Arthur asked eagerly.

"I have reason to believe we shall find her to-night. What brings you here, Connor?"

"The strong right arm of this very athletic young gentleman," answered the gambler with perfect nonchalance. "You may be sure I did not expect to have a game with you."

"He went to the house where Miss Bertram has been living," Arthur said in a tone whose firmness he meant as an intimation to the detective that he was still steadfast in his faith in Helen, "and was watching there when I went in. He followed me up to the other address and was following me further, when I decided to bring him with me."

"The first thing you know," interposed the gambler in his mocking way, "he will be beating you at your own game. It was a very slick performance. Only I wasn't following him. Why should I be?"

"What were you doing at the house of Miss Bertram?" the detective asked.

"Do you mean Mrs. Morgan?"

"Why do you call her Mrs. Morgan?"

"Because I don't suppose it's worth while to try to conceal the fact, although Mr. Raymond seems so fond of being fooled that it makes him mad to have the two names mixed up."

Arthur, alternately paling and flushing

with anger, was about to say something, when the detective stopped him with a gesture and continued the interrogation:

"Why do you say Miss Bertram is Mrs. Morgan?"

The gambler seated himself and with great deliberation lighted a cigarette. He puffed out the smoke, gazing at the detective with one little eye half-closed in a cunning leer.

"Suppose you tell me what right you have to use force to bring me here and then cross-examine me," he said.

"No right, I suppose."

"Oh! then I might as well go."

"If you prefer the station-house to here, yes. The fact is, Connor, that we have it in our power to establish a little charge of complicity in kidnapping against you."

"Kids are out of my line, Boyd," he answered, but made himself more comfortable instead of showing any sign of getting ready to go.

"Well," said the detective, dryly, as if he had effectually disposed of the other's objections to answering questions, "will you tell us now why you call Miss Bertram, Mrs. Morgan?"

"It's her name. She was married to Charlie Morgan I don't know how many months ago. They lived together for a while, but it suited them better to separate afterward. I suppose they found they didn't suit each other."

"Then she hasn't seen him for a long time, I suppose," said the detective.

"Why, no doubt you know she has visited him at Sing Sing."

"You are quite sure there is no mistake about Miss Bertram being the same who was married to Morgan."

"Well, I've met her in his rooms and been introduced to her as his wife. I don't know any more than that."

"Why did they separate?"

"I don't know. Why don't you ask Morgan?"

"When did they separate?"

"I don't know that, either."

"Mr. Raymond," said the detective, turning to Arthur, "will you come in here with me?" indicating a private room.

"And you have nothing more you wish me to tell you?" the gambler asked, making a feint of reaching for his hat and coat.

"Nothing, but you may as well remain where you are; the interests of the country won't suffer from your remaining inactive for one night."

Arthur followed the detective into the private room a prey to such anguish of mind as fortunately few have to suffer.

"Your object has been to convince me that the woman I love is unworthy," he said in a low tone as soon as the detective had closed the door. "Well, you have been unsuccessful."

"You do not yet believe that your Miss Bertram and Mrs. Morgan are the same person?"

"I cannot believe it, because to do so would be to imply a doubt of her truth and honor; and I never was surer than at this moment that Helen Bertram is peerless among women."

The detective made a gesture of despair, and on his usually impassive face was an expression of mild wonder.

"You are hard to convince," he said. "But let me tell you that I have been unusually careful in hunting this thing down, and I assure you that the Helen Bertram you love is the same woman who married Charles Mor-

gan, the same woman who has received visits from him when he was free, and who has been visiting him since he has been in prison."

Arthur's face was white and drawn with distress.

"I may not express any doubt of your correctness," he said, "but I know Helen Bertram, and nothing can ever convince me that she is anything but a noble, high-minded woman."

"Well, I wished all this to come to you gradually, Mr. Raymond, for I was in love once, myself—though I know I don't look it—and I know how it will pain you to have to give up your trust in the woman who has won your affection; but in this case everything is too plain and clear for any doubt to exist. Helen Bertram, or Mrs. Morgan, not only has visited her husband at Sing Sing, but what is more, the evidence is conclusive that there he and she plotted the abduction of your little Gertie."

"No, no!" Arthur cried.

"Well, you shall see before you return home to-night, if you will have the patience to wait here."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that instead of following any other clews, as the police are doing, I have put my best men on the track of Mrs. Morgan, and from bits of information that have been sent back to me there is no doubt that we shall have the child back in her home to-night, and Mrs. Morgan, her kidnapper, in custody."

"When it is proven I shall believe it," Arthur said, huskily.

The detective looked at him anxiously.

"You take this very hard," he said kindly, and after a few moments of reflection rose and left the room, asking Arthur to be patient if he had to wait for some time.

How long Arthur waited he did not know, for he was engaged with the most painful thoughts that could enter a man's brain—thoughts of the untruth of the woman to whom he had given the most passionate love of his heart. But he did not, would not, believe that Helen was anything but good and true.

When, after the lapse of a long time, the door opened, he looked up expecting to see the detective enter, but instead his eye fell on the sweet, sympathetic face of Amelia,

who entered with outstretched hands, followed by Robert.

"I was told you were here, Arthur, and I came to be what help I could. They do not know at the house that I am here, and won't unless they send in for me for something. Mr. Boyd telephoned to me to say that you were here and in distress; so I asked Robert to come with me. Robert is just a tower of strength when one wants sympathy;" and she smile at the now robust and handsome man, whose still-child-like face lighted up with tenderness and pleasure.

"I am sorry you took so much trouble, Amelia," Arthur answered. "I am strong enough to bear the worst that may befall me. At least, the greatest evil seems unlikely to fall on us—Mr. Boyd is quite sure that we shall have Gertie back to-night."

"But you are glad I came, Arthur?" she asked in a tone that proved how sure she was of her welcome.

"Indeed, Amelia, there is no one I would rather see. Do you believe the charges against Helen?"

"You do not, Arthur?"

"Not for an instant."

"Then I do not; for you should know. I believe there is some dreadful mistake that will be cleared up as soon as Helen is found. And Mr. Boyd is certain that she will soon be here with Gertie. He told me so just now."

"Soon, did he say?" gasped Arthur, hardly able to bear the strain.

"Soon. And he said Mrs. Bertram, Helen's mother, was on her way here, too."

Arthur began to pace the floor until, unable to bear the suspense he threw open the door and called Mr. Boyd in.

"Is it true that Miss Bertram and Gertie will soon be here?" he asked.

"They were found together in Jersey."

"This is certain?" Arthur asked, hoarsely.

"My best man has so telephoned me. Wait a moment! Some one has come in." He left the room but returned within five minutes, leading Mrs. Bertram, whose eyes were red with weeping, and who was trembling violently. "This is Mrs. Bertram, Mr. Raymond; will you ask her any questions?"

Arthur approached her, hardly able to command his voice, and his heart beating violently.

"Mrs. Bertram," he said, "where is your daughter, Miss Helen?"

"I do not know; she went away about noon, and I have not seen her since. Oh, tell me what is wrong!"

"They—they say her name—name is Mrs. Morgan, that—that she was married to Charles Morgan. Is—is that true? I don't believe it, but I want you to say it is not the truth."

"Yes—oh yes, she did marry him. I—I—"

"My God!" groaned Arthur.

"Hush!" said the detective, holding up his hand for silence; "there they are, now! Come!"

They seemed to pass through the narrow doorway in a body, so eager were they to see if indeed Helen and Gertie were there.

It was a sight never to be forgotten by those who saw it. Little Gertie lying in the strong arms of a detective, sound asleep, Helen, close beside them, guarded by another detective.

The kidnapped child was recovered and Helen was a prisoner.

CHAPTER XXXII

CERTAINLY, after all that had been said by the detective, it seemed as if there could now remain no doubt in Arthur's mind that Helen was indeed as guilty as had been declared.

Mr. Boyd felt heartily sorry for Arthur, but he was human enough to exult in the consciousness of having been right, and he could not help casting a look of triumph at him when Helen and little Gertie were brought into the room under such peculiar circumstances.

To his amazement, not to say disgust, however, he saw Arthur leaping toward Helen with nothing but sympathy and passionate love betraying themselves on his face.

He interposed his person between Arthur and Helen, so as to check the former's advance, at the same time crying out sharply:

"Don't you understand? That woman, Mrs. Charles Morgan, stole that child and has been caught with the child in her possession."

Arthur stopped and looked first at the detective and then at Helen. Everybody else in the room looked at him, even Amelia turning from little Gertie, to whom she had run at once, to watch the tragedy of a strong love dying.

"Helen," Arthur said, "you heard what he said."

Helen, who had indeed heard, and had started forward with a low cry of pain, stopped quickly at the sound of his voice and studied his face with passionate earnestness, her bosom heaving almost convulsively.

"Yes," she answered slowly, "I heard what he said; but what do you say?"

Before he could make any response the detective cried out:

"This will not do, sir. Permit me to carry my work on to the end;" and he turned sternly to Helen, demanding: "Is it not true that you are the wife of Charles Morgan?"

"Helen," broke in her mother tremulously, "I—"

"Answer my question," the detective said to Helen, interrupting her mother.

Helen looked only at Arthur, studying his

face as if she would read the thoughts that gathered behind it.

"Will you listen to me, Arthur, while I tell you what I wish you to know; or will you have me answer this man's questions?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Boyd," the detective holding little Gertie said. Mr. Boyd motioned him to silence, and the man shrugged his shoulder, as if submitting without comprehending why he was silenced.

"Mr. Raymond, you will oblige me, I hope, by permitting me to question Mrs. Morgan. If she be innocent she has no reason for objecting to answering."

"I am waiting for your answer, Arthur," Helen said.

"I can only answer that you must decide for yourself, Helen; I do not and have not wavered in my trust in you."

"And you will trust me to the end, no matter what may transpire?"

"I could not do otherwise," he answered firmly; but she could see trouble in his eyes.

"I will answer your questions," she said, turning to the detective with a look of queenly pride.

"You are Mrs. Charles Morgan, are you not?" he demanded.

"I am not," she answered.

"Do not hope to carry out such a deception, madam!" he cried indignantly, "for not only have I the proofs in my possession, but even your own mother but a moment before your entrance admitted—"

"I meant to say," broke in Mrs. Bertram, when the detective waved her aside.

"It is too late to retract now, madam. You know she is the wife of Charles Morgan."

"I am happy to say," Helen interposed quietly, "that I am not his wife. I was, but I am now legally divorced."

She turned to see how Arthur would receive her words, and she saw him start back with a gasp. Then their eyes met and exchanged a look that seemed to reassure her, for she turned once more to the detective, as if bidding him resume his questioning.

"You have visited him time after time since he has been in prison?" he said sharply. "It looks to me as if your divorce was only a matter of convenience."

"I have visited him a number of times since he has been in prison," she answered.

"Perhaps you will admit that you visited him to make arrangements for the abduction of this child?"

"Certainly I shall admit nothing of the kind."

"But you were found with the child in your possession?"

"Yes."

The detective turned triumphantly to Arthur. Helen was already looking at him.

"You see, Mr. Raymond," he said, "by her own words she is convicted. It is hardly worth while for us to prolong this scene."

Certainly Arthur could not fail to see that Helen had admitted enough to justify any one in pronouncing her guilty; but there was something in her expression while answering the detective that gave Arthur the feeling that no one could be more scornful than she of the baseness of which she was accused.

It is true that he had heard her admit her marriage to Charles Morgan with a pang that had caught him unprepared, in spite of what had been said before. But the fact that she was divorced was enough for him, for he was above the absurdity of condemning a woman because she has refused to live with

a man whom she can no longer love or respect.

Besides, he could see how all her treatment of him became justified and explained by the fact that she was a wife, and, above all, the wife of the man who had done so much to injure him.

All this and much more had passed through his brain while the detective was interrogating Helen. He could not understand, but his trust in the woman he loved was in no wise abated by anything he had heard her say.

So when the detective spoke to him his eyes were gazing into Helen's and finding there the proud assurance of perfect innocence. She did not speak, but waited for him to do so.

"Her words are susceptible of explanation, Mr. Boyd," he said.

"This is the maddest infatuation," the detective cried; "but your opinion, sir, shall not avail to save her from the penalty of her crime. Do you forget how you refused to believe that she was the wife of Charles Morgan?"

"I do not forget; but it is enough for me that she has repudiated him. Will you not speak, Helen, and clear yourself of the crime

of which you are accused? I do not ask it for myself, but for your own sake."

"You do not believe me guilty, Arthur?"

"Not for an instant."

She smiled and turned to the man who still held little Gertie in his arms.

"Let this man tell what he knows of the matter," she said.

Arthur pushed Mr. Boyd aside and took his place by Helen's side, murmuring in a tone that she alone could hear:

"Is this the end of my probation, Helen?"

"It is for you to answer that question," she answered; but the smile that parted her beautiful lips gave an added meaning to her words.

"Mr. Boyd," the man said, speaking softly, so as not to arouse the sleeping child, "it's all a mistake; this lady had nothing to do with the kidnapping."

"What?"

"That's right, sir; she saved the child, or it wouldn't be here now. The woman who did it is in charge now."

Mr. Boyd turned an incredulous glance on Helen, who, with her hand in Arthur's, waited quietly for her vindication.

"I suppose," said Mr. Boyd, resuming his ordinary manner with an effort, "you know what you are talking about, Dan?"

"Well, I think I ought to, sir."

"You know that we've been watching this —this lady for some time, and have known that she was meeting Morgan at Sing Sing?"

"I know that, but I know she saved this little girl and didn't kidnap her."

"Oh, I can't say anything about that, but on the face of it the fact is that if it had not been for this lady the woman who stole the child would have got away with it before I could have caught her."

"Perhaps," said Helen with aquiet dignity that was wonderfully impressive, "it would be better to let him tell just what did happen. If you feel after that that you really must connect me with this crime I shall have no objections."

"But I shall," interposed Arthur firmly. "I know Mr. Boyd too well to suppose for an instant that he has any but the best motives for persisting as he does in connecting you with the crime, but I none the less object most strenuously against his present attitude."

"But, Mr. Raymond," protested the detective.

"Let your man tell what he knows, if you will," said Arthur, "but in the meantime some one should telephone that Gertie is found and will be home in a short time."

"Of course, it must be as you say, Mr. Raymond, but before permitting Dan to tell what he knows of this evening's occurrences, let me say—and I say it without the least animosity toward this lady—that all her conduct has been much against her. Her moving from one place to another in such a mysterious manner, her visits to Charles Morgan at Sing Sing, and the very fact that now the baby has been recovered through her. It seems to me it is a fair question how she happens to have been able to know how to find the baby. Surely, Mr. Raymond, it must suggest itself to you that this opportune divorce from Morgan is strangely fortunate in coming at the same time with her discovery of the child. That is a service you are little likely to overlook."

"You certainly know how to put one and one together so as to make two, sir," said Helen calmly, her luminous eyes searching

Arthur's as if to discover any least glimmer of doubt.

She found none there, however, for standing by her side he fairly thrilled with the consciousness of her truth and purity, and he flashed back into her eyes a look of perfect trust.

"Amelia," he said suddenly, turning to her, "I want the two best women I know to become acquainted with each other. You know who Helen Bertram is; Helen this is my dear friend, Amelia Winsted."

Amelia had responded to Arthur's words with eager swiftness, gliding to the side of the woman who had won her lover from her with outstretched hand, saying heartily:

"Miss Bertram, I do not need to tell you that I am as firm a believer in you as Arthur himself. I am the more glad to see you that Arthur has said so much of you that I already feel more than half acquainted."

No one could have withstood the charm of the fair sweet girl, and Helen made no effort to do so, but rather found her heart going out to her at once.

"Friends are not so plentiful with me that I would refuse one," Helen said warmly,

"least of all when that one is a friend of Arthur's, and one, moreover, who must always win love easily for her own sake."

Amelia could not help flashing a merry look at Arthur as these last words fell from Helen's lips, but she refrained from uttering the teasing words that leaped to her lips. Instead, she turned to Mr. Boyd, who was watching them with a cynical expression curling his lip, and said gaily:

"Come, sir, let your detective tell his story, so that we may take our little Gertie home. Believe me, you have made a slight mistake this time, but we shall not value your services the less for that."

Even the disappointed detective was forced to melt a little under the genial warmth of Amelia's manner.

"Well," he said, "I suppose I must be mistaken, since you insist upon it, but Dan may as well tell what happened to him, so that we may all know."

"First telephone to my sister that her child has been found," Arthur said.

Mr. Boyd went to the telephone to notify Margie and Herbert, and Arthur took advantage of the opportunity to bring Robert and

Mrs. Bertram into the circle about Helen, introducing to each other those who were not yet acquainted, so that when the detective returned, having sent the message that was to bring relief and happiness in the sorrowing home, he found his supposed criminal in the midst of a group of friends.

"Go on, Dan!" he said.

Dan, having been relieved in the meantime of the burden of little Gertie by Arthur, took up his story with a very apologetic air.

"Why sir," he said, "you know you had me already shadowing Mrs. Morgan, or Miss Bertram, when you got word to me that the child had been kidnapped?"

"I had already learned of Miss Bertram's marriage to Morgan," Mr. Boyd said, by way of explanation.

"You said," went on Dan, "that Mrs. Morgan was sure to have had a hand in it. Well, I knew she couldn't have had any hand in it, because I hadn't lost sight of her for several days. However, I kept on her track, following her when she moved so suddenly, and wondering why she did it—"

"I did it because I found I was being

followed by an emissary of Charles Morgan's," Helen said, her eyes resting for a moment on the gambler, who had constituted himself an apparently amused spectator of the whole proceedings, and who upon this reference to himself bowed and smiled broadly.

Dan looked at him for a moment, murmured an "Oh!" of surprise and went on:

"I didn't know what to make of it, though, when suddenly Mrs. Morgan left her mother and went up to hang around Mr. Raymond's house."

Mr. Boyd interrupted with a low cry of triumph, at which Helen smiled as if amused. Dan continued his recital.

"To tell the truth, I lost sight of her there, and while I was hunting for her word came that the child had been stolen and saying Mrs. Morgan was suspected. Well, I didn't suspect her, because I'd got to know something about her while I was shadowing her. But as my orders were to look for the child in her keeping I did it, though I'd have looked for her anyhow, having lost sight of her."

"I had discovered that I was being followed," Helen said, "and had taken steps to escape the surveillance."

"Well," went on Dan, "it's no use to tell you how I found her again, but a man who has been shadowing anybody for any length of time can't lose him for long; so I came upon Mrs. Morgan and found that she was in hot pursuit of somebody else. That somebody else turned out to be another woman, dressed exactly like Mrs. Morgan, and who was in possession of the child. Mrs. Morgan had followed her until she had cornered her over in Jersey, and had taken the child from her. You wouldn't have thought she was any friend of Mrs. Morgan's, either, if you'd heard her talk. Anyhow, it was Mrs. Morgan saved the little kid, sure enough."

CHAPTER XXXIII

DAN'S story was conclusive, even with Mr. Boyd, who promptly made an apology to Helen for his unjust suspicions of her, and was as promptly forgiven.

"And now let us hurry home," said Arthur. "You will go with us, Helen; you and your mother."

"Thank you, no," answered Helen; "we will go to our own home."

"She is afraid of being thanked," laughed Amelia; "but I am sure there can be nothing comfortable in your own home, Helen, if you have just moved to-day; so I am going to insist that you and your mother come with me. We have lots of room, and you simply must come and stay with me. Add your word, Mrs. Bertram, for Helen looks as if she meant to be obstinate."

"Please accept her invitation, Helen," pleaded Arthur.

"But, Arthur," she murmured in a troubled tone.

"You want a good excuse for accepting," laughed Amelia, who seemed to know how to set Helen at ease; "and I have the excuse: we are all dying to know how you happened to be on hand at the right time. You see we have a right to know and we shan't sleep until we have been told."

Not much more was wanted to win Helen, but before she would finally yield she took Arthur to one side and said to him frankly:

"I am not going to pretend, Arthur, that I do not understand your feelings toward me, nor shall I any longer try to hide mine from you, but you know now that I am a divorced woman, and that many persons have a strong prejudice against a woman who is divorced; your family may."

"I do not know how some members of my family may feel, and I do not care, Helen. Marriage is a matter that concerns those who enter into it, and them only. To me it is a matter of no concern whatever that you are divorced. I love you for what you are. Anyhow, I am sure you could come into my family under no better conditions than these: that you are the savior of little Gertie and that you are the woman I love."

"Then I will go home with Miss Winsted, but not to remain. I will let your family see me, and I will tell you all how it happened that I was on hand to save Gertie. In this way there will be no need of further explanation to them as to who and what I am."

It is improbable that any one but Amelia could have told how it happened that the party distributed itself as it did on the way home. Arthur, if he had spoken for himself, would surely have expressed himself as well pleased that it *happened* that when he got into his carriage he found Helen already there.

Amelia was not one to half do anything she undertook to do at all. There was no half-heartedness in her sympathy with Arthur's love for Helen; and now that she had seen Helen her sympathy was rather enthusiasm, and she felt that Arthur's steadfastness in spite of everything was fully justified.

She knew very well that the others were always secretly wondering whether or not she had really ceased to love Arthur, but that was a thing that did not trouble her. She had settled it in her own mind very comfortably. She certainly did love Arthur,

and was sure that that he loved her; but also she knew now that something besides love was necessary to justify marriage, and that something was nothing less than the physical attraction which she had never felt when she was a weakling, and which she did not feel toward Arthur now.

So it was with a sense of positive comfort that she settled down in her carriage by the side of her pupil, Robert, with little Gertie snuggled in her arms and Mrs. Bertram opposite. She was sincerely rejoiced that she had been able to contrive it so that Arthur and Helen should ride home together.

As for Robert, he was yet such a singular mixture of boy and man that he was never quite sure whether to say what he felt or to hide his feelings. On this occasion he had smiled his satisfaction at being by Amelia's side, but had said nothing.

Generally his manner with Amelia reminded those who saw them together of a great, dignified mastiff; and while Mrs. Raymond and Maude, in particular, never ceased to repine that Arthur did not return to his first love, they yet were able to notice how devoted Robert was to his teacher.

It never occurred to them, however, and perhaps it had not yet occurred to Amelia, that such devotion as Robert now showed might very well in time develop into that sort of love which demands marriage for its satisfaction.

As yet, however, Robert was thinking of nothing of that sort, but only of the improvement of his mental and physical self; whatever else was in his heart was not in a form to be recognized by him. He drank in every word Amelia uttered, and stored its meaning away; and what with his desire to please her and his greed for knowledge he had made marvelous strides.

Physically he was already in a better condition than most men who have been free all their lives to strengthen themselves; but with Arthur as an example, and Arthur's and Amelia's enthusiasm to spur him on, he was determined to build up for himself a physique to be proud of.

He worshiped Arthur, who represented to him all that was worthiest in manhood, just as Amelia represented the best in womanhood; and if he studied to think as Amelia would have him, so he unconsciously studied

to look and to act as much as possible like Arthur.

And he succeeded so well in this that Amelia was always amused by the curious resemblance between them; a resemblance which never deceived her, but which had made more than one of Arthur's acquaintances to hail Robert as they caught sight of his broad shoulders at a distance.

Amelia did most of the talking in that carriage, Mrs. Bertram being very weary and Robert, as usual, content to listen to what to him was the sweetest music in the world.

It is needless to tell what went on in the other carriage. Not many words were spoken by either Helen or Arthur, notwithstanding the many that were needed to explain all that had come into the hearts of them both. Yet, little as was said, a supreme contentment was in the heart of each of the lovers when at last the home of the Raymonds was reached.

Arthur knew what he most craved to know from Helen, that she loved him with a fervor and passion no whit less than his own for her. And she knew that his knowledge of her marriage to Morgan, the man

he had such cause to hate, had not affected his love for her.

That much she had asked him in plain words, for she could not be happy else. The question had come after the first moments of silence, the carriage rolling noiselessly along on its rubber-tired wheels.

"Arthur," she had said, "I meant to let you know about Charles Morgan in a different way. At first I had not intended that you should ever see me again, but when you came upon me over on the East Side I knew that that was hopeless. It was certain then that we must meet and that you must know that I had been the wife of your deadliest enemy."

"But that is all gone and by, dear; why talk of it?"

"Something must be said between us, Arthur. I had not meant to deceive you at first; I was using my own name when I posed for Mr. Bernardo because I so loathed the name of Morgan. Afterward I learned how much cause you had for hard feelings for him, and I feared you could never forgive me for having been his wife."

"I only know that all other feelings are swallowed up in the love I bear you, Helen."

"But you were shocked when you learned that I was his wife. I could see that you had all along refused to believe that such infamy could be mine; and then, when the truth came to you from my own lips you were terribly shocked."

"For one second, Helen. Then I looked into your eyes and knew that you were yourself and neither the wife of this man nor the other. I loved you for yourself. I have no prejudice against divorce; rather, I admire that woman who refuses the degradation which is inevitable when husband and wife do not love. Love is the only justification for marriage. Marriage under any other conditions is harlotry. So you see I honor you the more because you refused to live with the man you did not love."

"It is what I would have expected from you, Arthur, and I never feared for your opinion of that. But I was Morgan's bride, Arthur. May it not be that you will recall that fact some day and let it lessen your love for me? I want to be sure of that now."

"And you may be sure. I love you neither less nor more because you were his bride.

I am effected in no way whatever by the fact. I love you and I am content that you are as you are. I can imagine you no nobler, no better, no worthier; I can imagine no other woman half so worthy. In my heart, neither in my mind do I mingle you and that man in one idea; you are separate and alone; and if you had never seen him he could have no more part in your life, so far as I am concerned, than some man unknown to me. Can you not understand from your own heart, Helen, that in loving you I set you apart from the world? If love means to you what it does to me there need be no further questionings."

And there were none. Their lips met in their first kiss, and from that moment they set out together in life. A priest or magistrate might put legal bonds on them, but the consecration of love was theirs already; and that was the real and only conscration of their union.

But there was yet the family approval to be gained, and although Arthur was prepared to wed the woman of his choice in face of the opposition of the whole world, yet even he wished his mother and sisters to like

Helen and approve his choice of her as his wife.

But it meant far more to Helen than to Arthur, for no woman cares to enter a family unloved, undesired; so that Helen looked forward to the approaching meeting with Mrs. Raymond and her daughters with no little apprehension.

Arthur might sweep aside their objections, as a strong man may, but Helen shrank from the criticisms and the meaning looks of women who take the old-fashioned view of divorce, and who see in a divorcee one who has violated one of Heaven's laws and who is far on her way toward infamy.

But she need have had no fears for what might happen that night, for the minds of all in the house were filled with no other idea than the rescued child, who was put into Margie's trembling arms by Amelia.

Nor would Margie give Gertie up even to her father, but held her close to her breast while she looked and listened, speaking only to Helen when Arthur introduced her as the one who had found and rescued Gertie.

"God bless you for it!" she sobbed; "and when you have children of your own, as I

hope you will, you will understand what it is to me to have my little girl restored to me."

"She is to be my wife," Arthur said, so that all heard. "You have heard me speak of Helen Bertram; this is she."

"I do not wonder you love her," Margie said.

Mrs. Raymond was no less kind than Margie, kissing Helen and making her welcome and showering grateful thanks upon her. Maude, too, who remembered more clearly than the others the things that had been said about Helen by the detective, yet met her with effusive cordiality.

Then there followed much eager talk about the finding of Gertie, and Helen would have been glad to tell her story then, but they were all too much excited and all too much tired, as Amelia saw; and it was she who interposed to prevent the telling of a story which she knew as well as Helen might not be received as it should be.

She therefore whispered to Arthur that it would be far better if Helen postponed the telling of her story until the next day, before which time she, Amelia, would have an

opportunity of preparing Mrs. Raymond and Maude.

She then persuaded Helen and her mother to pass the remainder of the night with her, representing that no one was in the right mood to hear a story which should be told more in detail, anyhow, than the time allowed.

"Margie and Herbert are too much taken up with Gertie to listen," she said, "and they will be your strongest allies, Helen. You see, I have taken the liberty of reading your thoughts; please forgive me!"

"Oh, I am grateful to you," Helen answered. "I confess I am dreading the effect on them of the revelation that I was once that man's wife, and now divorced from him."

"Dread nothing, dear," said Amelia in a tone of conviction; "you will be received as heartily as you could wish. You will see that it is so to-morrow."

So it was with the comfort of this assurance that Helen laid her tired head on her pillow and gave herself up to sleep, nearer to peace than she had been in many weary weeks.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AMELIA, who seemed almost literally tireless, now that she had become what some of her friends called a physical culture fiend, made her appearance in the Raymond home while they were still in the breakfast room; and there was not a person present who did not hail her with delight.

"I've comed home again," was Gertie's greeting of her; whereupon Amelia caught her up and kissed her again and again, saying as she put her down at last:

"Isn't it awful to think that she might not have been here but for the noble heroism of that lovely Helen Bertram? Ah, Arthur, you have a right to feel proud of having won the love of such a woman. Didn't you think her magnificent, Mrs. Raymond?"

"I don't think I had a really good look at her, but I know she was beautiful. How is she? I hope she rested well. We are all eager to hear her tell how she happened to find Gertie."

"That's right, Arthur," laughed Amelia, as she saw him slipping quietly out of the room. "Helen is sure to be lonely, for papa and Mrs. Bertram are talking together as if no one else existed in the world."

"He seems desperately in love," said Maude, not too sweetly.

"As he ought to be," answered Amelia, promptly, "for she is as good as she is beautiful. As for us, we ought to be forever grateful to her, for the detective said that if it had not been for her the kidnappers would have made their escape with Gertie; and it might have been months, if ever, before she could have been found."

"We are grateful enough," said Mrs. Raymond; "our only difficulty is to show how much we feel."

"That will be easy enough," said Amelia, confidently; "you have nothing to do but to show her that she is welcome as Arthur's wife."

"Of course, we will do that," said Margie, quickly.

"I don't understand what Mr. Boyd meant when she said she was Morgan's wife at the time he accused her of having stolen Gertie,"

answered Mrs. Raymond, refusing to commit herself.

"Of course, mother, she can't be his wife if Arthur talks of marrying her," cried Margie. "For my part, there will be no half-heartedness in the way I give her my thanks."

"She isn't Morgan's wife, of course," Amelia said; "I can assure you of that, Mrs. Raymond."

"I really didn't suppose she was," Mrs. Raymond said, somewhat stiffly; "I only wondered what Mr. Boyd meant."

"He meant that Helen had been his wife once."

"What?" was the instant cry in a horrified chorus.

"She is divorced now," Amelia went on, her mild eyes beginning to flash.

"Divorced!" cried Mrs. Raymond and Maude in a breath. "Arthur marry a divorced woman!"

"There is no disgrace in divorce," said Herbert quickly.

"None whatever," chimed in Margie, who had quite recovered herself, after the first shock of knowing that Helen had been the

wife of Morgan. "I think the disgrace is in living with a man without loving him."

"You have peculiar notions." said Maude, with a sneer.

"Yes, thank heaven! she has," said Amelia, aggressively. "And I fancy none of you would have stopped to ask whether she was divorced or not when she was saving little Gertie from goodness knows what horrible fate. What difference does it make whether she is divorced or not? The question is, is she a good woman? And I can tell you that she is one of the noblest women that ever lived."

"And I can tell you, mother," said Margie, impressively, "that Arthur will marry her, anyhow, because he loves her better than any and everybody else, as a man ought to love the woman he marries; so I advise that we not only thank her for what she has done, but open our arms to her, caring only that she is a good and true woman."

"You know what a scoundrel that man Morgan is," Amelia, following Margie quickly. "Would you really have had her live with him after discovering his character?"

"No-o, I suppose not; of course not.

But why did she marry him in the first place?"

"She is going to tell you that this morning if you will listen to her. I came in to prepare your mind for what I knew would be hard for you to hear. I know how good she is, and I know how dearly Arthur loves her; so I came in on purpose to predispose you in her favor. I knew, dear Mrs. Raymond," she went on, cajolingly, her arm stealing around the old lady's shoulders and her little hand caressing her cheek, "how your kind heart would go out to her if you would hear her patiently. She was young when she married him, and she did it because her mother insisted. Will you blame her now?"

Mrs. Raymond laughed softly and drew the lovely face down so that she could kiss it.

"I don't wonder your father is your slave," she said. "I certainly never believed I would receive, to say nothing of welcoming, a divorced woman as my daughter-in-law, and now I am going to do it."

"And you'll love her the moment you really know her," cried Amelia, joyfully. "Oh,

you dear thing! Hug her for me, Margie, while I go to bring Helen in."

"And that is the girl Arthur gave up," said Mrs. Raymond, shaking her head dolefully as Amelia ran away.

"Helen married to please her mother," said Herbert, pithily.

"Besides," said Margie, quickly, "Amelia doesn't want to marry Arthur any more than he does her."

"I think she is very fond of him," interjected Maude.

"And Arthur is very fond of her," came from Robert, who had said nothing before; "he told Helen that she was one of his dearest friends."

When they all looked at him, as they did on his speaking, they noticed that his face was scarlet. They exchanged glances, and Margie began to talk of Gertie. They had forgotten Robert, or they would not have talked so freely of Arthur and Amelia.

Presently they all went up to the sitting-room, knowing that Helen would soon come with Amelia and Arthur, as indeed was the case. And now they had their first good opportunity to see Helen and to study her; and

as they looked they were all forced to admit that they had never seen her equal.

Not that they sat still and studied her, either; for the fact was that Margie ran to her and took her into her arms, kissing her and saying loving grateful things that made Helen happy at once; and then Mrs. Raymond casting away her old, conventional notions, and seeing only the noble woman who had won Arthur's love and who had put them under such a tremendous obligation by her recovery of Gertie, went to her and kissed her and whispered in her ear:

"I know everything, and I welcome you as my new daughter."

Maude was less hearty, but she was gracious, and Helen's eyes filled with tears as she sat down between Mrs. Raymond and Arthur.

Amelia, with a kindly thoughtfulness that both Arthur and Helen fully appreciated, kept everybody's attention fixed on her by her merry talk until Helen was ready to begin her story, which she did finally, saying:

"I am glad dear Amelia has told you the painful part of my story. It would have been very hard for me to be the first to tell you

that, for I cannot but know how such a revelation must affect you."

Her voice quavered a little as she spoke, but her head was held with a queenly poise and her wonderful eyes looked bravely around at the faces there, as if to show that, whatever their criticism might be, she held herself to be in the right.

"But we don't think a bit the less of you for it," cried Margie at once.

"Not a bit," said Mrs. Raymond, more and more won by the strong, brave nature.

"Thank you," Helen said, in a low tone, and then went on: "It was necessary for you to know that I had been married to Charles Morgan, because it was through that fact that it was finally in my power to save little Gertie. Did Amelia tell you that I was an ignorant girl when I married that man to please mother, who had been completely deceived by his hypocritical professions?"

"She told us something of it," Margie answered.

"Well, I was ignorant, indeed, but I shrank from marrying him, and before I was one week his wife I knew him for such a base wretch that I refused to remain under his roof,

and would never again bear his name. I left him and have supported myself ever since. He has tried over and over again to win me back; and even when he was trying to persuade Amelia to be his wife he was also persecuting me with his solicitations to return to him. You may judge by that how lost to shame, decency and morality he must be."

If anything had been needed to completely win over those present, this proof of Morgan's infamy would have been sufficient. Helen went on, with but a moment's pause:

"It is needless to say anything more about him, except to add that my misery on learning of the cruel wrong he had done you"—she turned to Arthur with a divine smile—"was more than I can express. I hid myself from you because I thought that was best and right; but Morgan found me through his agents when he was in prison and sent me such messages as persuaded me to go to him in prison. I am glad now that I did, for it was on my first visit to him that I gained the idea that he meant to wreak his wrath on you in some terrible way."

"We owe you even more than we know, then," said Margie, her thoughts flying to

the possibility that Gertie might have been made to suffer for them all.

"Anything I have done I am glad to have done," Helen answered. "But, not to make too long a story of it, I was so sure that something was being plotted by that man that I consented to visit him more than once, always hoping to discover something."

"How good of you!" Mrs. Raymond cried.

"Finally I was sure that there was a plot, although I could not discover its nature. I was sure only that Arthur was to be struck at somehow, and a number of small circumstances convinced me that the day was near. I knew I was being followed, and it was to escape this surveillance that I moved suddenly yesterday. I thought I was shadowed by one of Morgan's friends; now I know that he, and the detective as well, were having me followed."

"I fancy," laughed Herbert, "that Mr. Boyd would not feel flattered if he knew what you are telling us."

"At any rate," responded Helen, "I am glad now that there was a detective following me. Well, yesterday I became so uneasy that I determined to escape surveillance if

it were possible, and come up here to watch over the house. For some time I waited in the neighborhood, half-minded to warn you, Mr. Courtney, but deterred always by the very vagueness of my knowledge."

"I wish you had made yourself known to me," Margie said.

"What could I have told you in excuse for doing so? Morgan was in prison, Arthur scorned to guard himself, and I had no suspicion that Gertie was in danger. I had already written an anonymous letter to Arthur. But nothing matters now."

"No," said Arthur; "all's well that ends well, and I think this has ended very well."

Helen blushed divinely and went on with her story.

"While I was waiting uneasily around here I overheard Mrs. Courtney say something about Gertie to her mother, in answer to a question as to her being in the park. She and Mrs. Raymond were walking down the street together. Instantly it flashed through my brain that Gertie might be in danger, and, without stopping to reason the matter out, I hurried to the park.

"I don't suppose I should have taken any

especial note of Gertie being put into a carriage even then, if I had not been struck by the fact that the woman with the child was dressed precisely like me, and even bore herself somewhat as I do. I think I realized the whole plot in that one instant; and I do not need to say that I set out in pursuit, hardly needing the sight of the nurse to assure me that my suspicions were correct.

"If I had not been as muscular and active as I am, I am sure I should never have kept on the track of that carriage. As it was, it reached the ferry to New Jersey before I could overtake it, and when I came to the ferry house it was to find the boat gone.

"I waited for the next boat, but the woman had had time enough to take a train for somewhere. However, I could describe her and Gertie, and so learned from the ticket agent where she had gone. I followed by the next train and traced her easily enough to the house she had gone to.

"What trouble I might have had there I cannot say, for the detective, who had fallen upon my trail again, after having lost me once, came up just in time to assist me in rescuing Gertie. And that is the story."

"A very small part of the story, I know," said Herbert, coming over to her and taking her by the hand. "I am sure that if you were to tell all that your modesty has made you suppress we should have a great deal more to listen to."

"Well," said Mrs. Raymond, "she need not suppose we are to be put off with so little. When she and Arthur have had their talk out—which I am sure they must be aching to have—we shall insist upon everything. In the meantime, my dear"—stooping over after she had risen from her chair and kissing Helen—"we have our duties to perform and you and Arthur shall be bothered no more."

"Please, Mrs. Raymond!" cried Helen, scarlet with confusion.

"Mother is right, Helen," Arthur exclaimed, eagerly. "We have a great deal to say to each other."

The members of the Raymond household smiled at Arthur's frankness, but the smile was a sympathetic one; and each, with a kindly word or a lovingly teasing one passed out of the room, leaving the lovers alone together. And the last one to look back saw Arthur open his strong arms to Helen.

CHAPTER XXXV

THERE was nothing of the coquette in Helen's composition, so that when the last barrier to her union with Arthur was removed she let him have his way, telling him that he could not love her more than she loved him, nor be more eager than she for their marriage.

"Our probation has already been long and hard enough to satisfy anybody," she said frankly, "and what is of most account is that be know our own minds beyond any possibility of doubt."

So Arthur set an early date, and with the least possible fuss they were married. They went away for a short wedding trip, and then returned to take a little house not far from the old home.

Once, as they sat together alone in their little sitting-room, Arthur said he was rejoiced to think that they had so well overcome all that had threatened them; and he mentioned the woman who had kidnapped Gertie, Red Connor the gambler, and Morgan,

all in prison. But Helen shook her head at that and said:

"Arthur, I do not mean to live in dread of anybody, but I know that as long as Charles Morgan lives danger threatens us."

Arthur laughed and shrugged his shoulders, saying he was afraid of no man, least of all one who was behind the prison bars.

Helen was one of those women strong enough in her own convictions to be in no need of argument to sustain her opinion; so she said no more, but kept watch over Charles Morgan, even while he was in prison, with the aid of Mr. Boyd. And when the day of Morgan's liberation came she told Arthur and begged him to be on his guard.

By this time there was a little Amelia in their household—a dear little baby, whose coming had been so well planned for that there had never yet been one moment of pain for it or the mother; and it was on account of the baby that Helen conjured Arthur to be careful.

Arthur laughed, but promised; and for a while he did have a care whenever he went into a part of the city more evil than another; but his was not a nature to harbor

fear and he soon became careless. And perhaps he would have come to laugh at Helen's fears had not the evil shadow of Morgan been cast across the pathway of his life in a last desperate attempt to darken it forever.

Robert, by this time, had quite come into his own mentally and physically, although his education was still going on under the care of competent teachers.

Amelia said that he had graduated out of her class, but Robert, with a meaning that Amelia ignored, always said that he had not and never would willingly graduate out of her class. In fact, as everybody, Amelia included, knew, Robert was passionately in love with her.

One evening, soon after Morgan's release, Robert came home late from the office, where he had been to see Arthur, and it was quite dark when he passed through Morningside Park.

He was quite as fearless as Arthur, and it never troubled him to go through the park even on the darkest night, but, strangely enough, there was a house that he had to pass after leaving his own which he never passed without a sort of nervous tension. It

was an old, tumbledown structure, surrounded by shrubbery and standing alone in the block, a relic of a suburban home in the days when New York was a small city.

On the evening in question he felt this singular nervousness as he approached the house, but he laughed at himself, as his custom was, and strode manfully on.

This time, however, his apprehension was not a vain one; for, as he passed, quelling firmly the shudder that threatened to pass over him, a shadowy form rose from behind the shrubbery and leaped through the open gate after him. Robert had just time to turn and see the form close upon him, a gleaming knife descending to sheath itself in his breast.

"Curse you!" came in hissing tones from the lips of his assailant.

Instinctively Robert caught at the knife and uttered a loud cry for help. He warded off the blow, but at the expense of having three fingers badly gashed. In an instant he struck out with the other hand and hit the man, who uttered a horrible imprecation and threw himself on him, as if determined to kill him at any cost.

But Robert was strong and agile, and in the excitement forgot the cuts on his fingers, catching the hand that held the knife and endeavoring with his free hand to clutch the other's throat.

What the issue might have been it would be impossible to say, for the man was endowed with great strength and was animated by the most furious anger; but fortunately there came the sound of rapid footsteps approaching, impelling the man to strive to free himself.

This he succeeded in doing just as the newcomer reached the spot; and he might have made good his escape if he had not stopped to deal a last blow with his knife at Robert, cutting through his coat and even drawing blood at the left breast.

Then, indeed, with a savage cry of exultation as Robert staggered back, he turned and fled; but the man who had come up was a policeman and he had witnessed the blow with the knife. He fired two shots at the fleeing man. The latter stumbled, rose again and fell prone on the sidewalk.

When Robert and the policeman hurried to him he lay still; he was dead. The second

bullet must have pierced the heart or some vital organ.

The dead man was Charles Morgan, and no one doubted that he had mistaken Robert for his brother.

* * * * *

Yes, Robert and Amelia did marry, though not until Robert was such a magnificent specimen of manhood, mental, moral and physical, that when he was in the same room with Arthur no one could justly say that either was inferior to the other.

THE END

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